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Trade union guide special supplement

Solidarity forever?

Unions need to be more like the AA, argue Philip Bassett and Alan Cave

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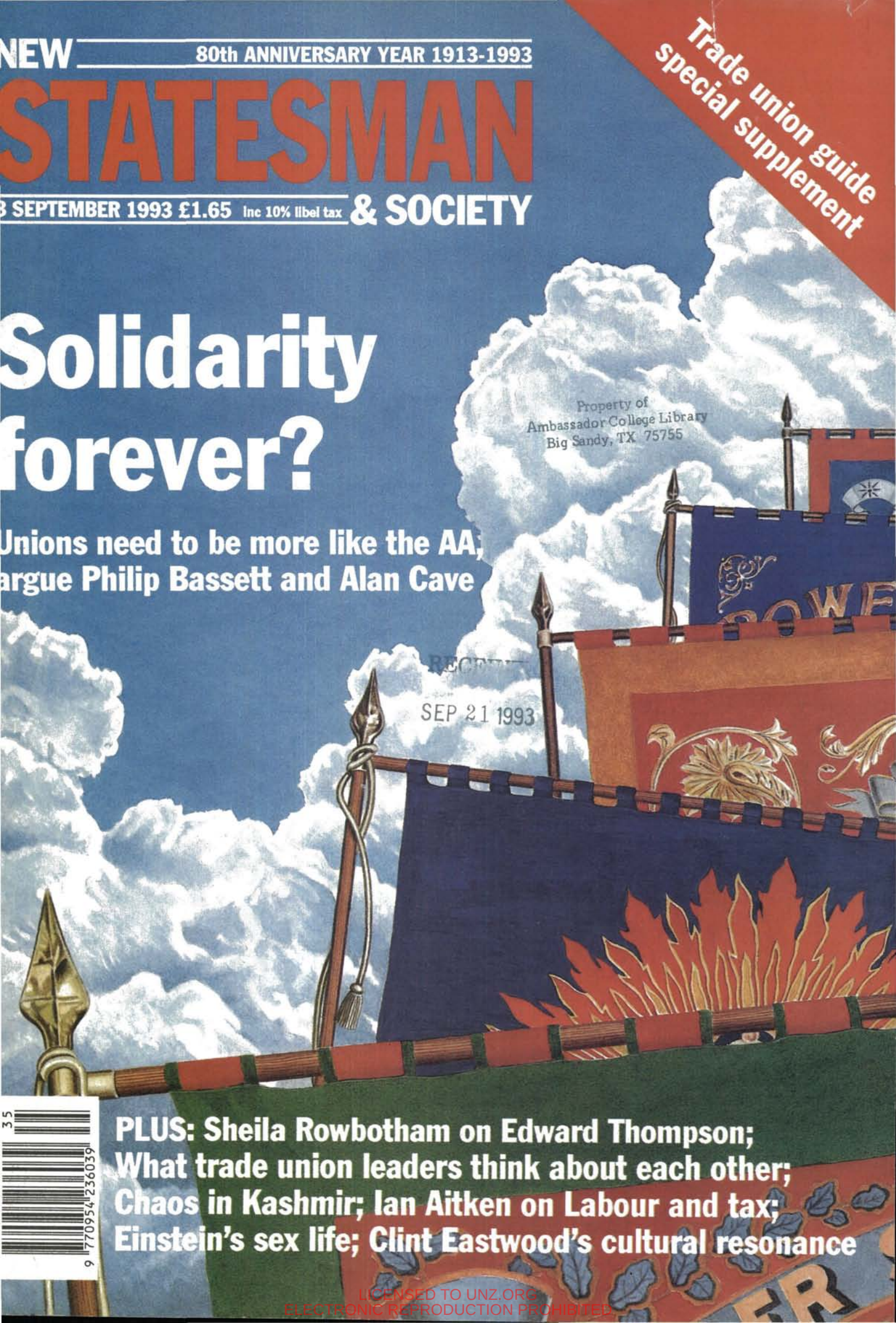

PLUS: Sheila Rowbotham on Edward Thompson; What trade union leaders think about each other; Chaos in Kashmir; Ian Aitken on Labour and tax; Einstein's sex life; Clint Eastwood's cultural resonance

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SHEEHY — A BLUEPRINT FOR DISASTER

The report of the Sheehy Committee on Police Responsibilities and Rewards is a devastating attack on the pay and conditions of service of all officers.

If implemented the report of this committee, whose membership and terms of reference were decided by the Home Secretary, will inflict serious damage on our ability to serve the public. Coupled with the White Paper on police reform, which transfers power from democratic local police authorities to central government, the Sheehy report is bad news for the British people.

We are grateful for the support we have already received from **UNISON**, which represents our civilian colleagues, who understand that Sheehy also has important implications for them.

The law requires police officers to refrain from political activity. We cannot belong to a trade union or take industrial action. Yet Sheehy proposes to emasculate the right of the Police Federation even to negotiate, by reducing us to the status of a consultative body.

Sheehy is bad for the police, bad for policing and a threat to democracy.

THE POLICE FEDERATION, 15 LANGLEY ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY KT6 6LP

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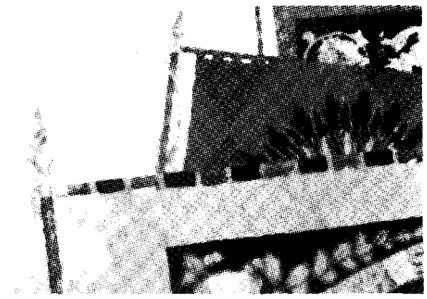

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Do you dare to dissent?

Speak out in an Any Questions type discussion with Andrew Puddephatt of Liberty, journalist Yvonne Roberts and *NSS* editor Steve Platt. The chair will be taken by Julia Langdon. Under discussion will be dissent in the nineties and the future of protest. Erosion of Dissent takes place at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London W1 on Tuesday 14 September at 6.30 pm. Admission is free.

Since the sudden closure of London's Camden Parkway cinema we've had to find an alternative venue for our Defence Fund preview of Ken Loach's new film *Raining Stones*. Coming to our aid is the Camden Plaza, 211 Camden High Street, London NW1 (next to Camden tube). Start your Sunday gently with Barry Norman at 10am for 10.30am. Tickets can be bought in advance from *NSS* by phone or post, and are £5. Cheques should be payable to the *NSS* Defence Fund (see coupon).

The early Sunday start means you will have had just enough time to recover from the exhaustions of watching, or perhaps playing in, our John Major Memorial cricket match which takes place the day before on Saturday 18 September, at the St Peter's Road Cricket Ground, Huntingdon. Regrettably, the Prime Minister won't be able to take part but does anyone know a suitable lookalike alternative who can spin a few balls? Call Nicola Baird on 071-739 3211.

Bruce Jones in a scene from Ken Loach's new film showing at the Camden Plaza on Sunday 19 September

I want to live in a country that has a free press so that I can read what I choose. I want the law changed to stop printers, distributors and retailers being sued for libel. I want the NSS to survive.

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I would like to order . . . . . tickets for the *Raining Stones* preview at £5 each.

I would like to order . . . . . Black (XL) *Don't Think* T-shirts at £7.99, plus £1 p&p (thanks to *The Oldie* for this design), and/or I would like to order . . . . . Black (XL) *Libel Tour* T-shirts at £7.99, plus £1 p&p.

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Our thanks this week to:

HA Wainwright, Ms SL Fletcher, DJ Price, Reg L Snow, Time Out Magazine, Hammersmith & Fulham Labour Party, Dr PA Draper, Mr AR Prager, Medway Trades Council, Tesni Hollands, John Grace, R Barker, The Massey Family, Harwich CLP, R Lambert, Benjamin Morrin, Darren Smale, East of Scotland Branch GPMU, Walton CLP County Ward Assn, Y Boyd, Bruce Carson, King, Rev Pete Ellen, Darren Smale, Alan Bowdler, Sue Hyde, Sue Pearson, WM Birmingham, Mark Brockbank, Chesterfield Branch NUJ, Julian Walker, Jim Little, John Pugsley, Robert Leaney, M Sinclair, Mark Chiverton, Bill Stewart, David Spaven & Moya Cove, Mary & Bill Laud, IPMS Raffle, Sue Bargh, Peter Hayward, Stuart Speeden, Polegate & Willingdon Labour Party, Peter & Madeleine Andrews, University Ward Labour Party, Severn Trent Water Branch NALGO, Scottish Electricity Branch NALGO, Drayton & Farlington Branch Labour Party, Mrs M Jan,Andrew McIntosh, David Guinness, Adrian Abbott, Cambridge Medical Branch MSF, Lesley Shipgood, Lenore Robinson, Anna Searle, Robin Bevis, Paul Edwards, Stephen Khan, Gideon Hoffman, H & J Archard, Nigel Jerrett, CPSA DHSS Leeds Area Branch, Adah Kay, John Prescott MP, Fire Brigades Union, Robert Atkins, Richard Taylor, John Gunnell MP, Jonathon French, N Devon CLP, Colin Pickthall MP, Bryan Davies MP, Eleanor Fairclough, Kent Branch NAPO, GMB, Erica South, J Tomkins, Thanet Trades Union Council, John Sheriff, GD Hackney, George Melly, W Goodhart, Jeremey Smith & Ann Pettifor, Phil Edwards, Robert A Kelly, Chipping Barnet Labour Party (Hadley Branch), Harriett Gilbert, Roland H Farrant, Martin Roger, Clydesdale CLP, GPMU, Dagenham Labour Party, Emily Humphreys, Phil Parry, S Nicholson, L Cumming, R Thornton, J Aggus, RC James, Justin Bentley, J Done, S Irons, C Collingwood, Julian Rosser, Dave Hicks, Neil Pigden, Sara Ricks, Stephen Boorman, Gary Kitchen, Susan Mayne, St Clements Ward Labour Party, National Union of Journalists (Bristol Branch), Sunderland Cooperative Party, Ipswich Labour Party, Frank & Evelyn Ross, Keith Flett, Loretta Shoben, Jenny McArthur, Peter Tomlinson, Steve Leyland, Mat Coward, Alex Carlisle MP, Chris Smith MP, Shelagh M Freeman, Mrs IM Cornfield, J Hamill, AL Burton, Wagadon, Geoff Wallis, B Maystone, Georgina Smith, Olivia Chandler, Ian Bullock, Dave Willson, Helen Ward, Mossley Hill CLP, Norma Thompson, Janet Wright, RL Hunt, Huw Rowley, Catherine Dillon, Paul Edwards, Marcia Saunders, Patricia Wynn Davies, The Hon Julia Stonor Camoys, I. Hyde, Kip's Catering, DG Garnett, Charles Atkinson, Andrew Huyton, RA Everett

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Andrzej Krauze

The Save Bosnia Appeal

The Alliance to Save Bosnia-Hercegovina (c/o 119 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 2EQ) has been set up, with the full backing of NSS, to try, even at this late hour, to save the people of Bosnia from Serb and Croat aggression. This is an abbreviated version of the alliance's founding statement.

More than a year ago, Bosnian Serb secessionist forces, organised by the former Yugoslav Army and directed from Belgrade, launched a brutal aggression against the people and elected government of Bosnia-Hercegovina. Since then, this multi-ethnic, democratic and internationally recognised republic has been devastated. Countless communities have been destroyed, countless people tortured and murdered, three quarters of the population displaced, thousands of women and girls raped, towns and cultural monuments razed. All of this has been done deliberately, as part of a policy of terror to clear non-Serb population from coveted territories. Less than 50 years after Europeans vowed "never again" to allow the extermination of an entire people, Bosnia's Muslims are facing genocide.

Bosnian Croat units are now also brazenly following their own expansionary agenda, using the same barbaric practices of "ethnic cleansing" pioneered by the Serbs. Although large numbers of Serbs and Croats remain loyal to a government standing for national co-existence, and continue to serve in the Bosnian defence forces, most of the country's territory is now occupied by blood-and-soil nationalists pursuing the odious ideal of ethnic purity and separation. In a society distinguished for centuries by its intermingling of cultures and nationalities, theirs is a war of annihilation directed not just against civilians but against a whole civilisation.

The Bosnian government has struggled against this horrifying onslaught, but has learned to its cost that the country is regarded as expendable, unentitled—whatever its formal rights under the UN charter—to the same protection that a threatened oil-rich state can expect. The UN and EC, moreover, in all their various peace proposals, have legitimised the aggression by effectively accepting the repugnant logic of ethnic division, arguing like the secessionist leaders, or their masters in Belgrade and Zagreb, that Bosnia's constituent nations cannot live together, so must be segregated (however awful the human cost) by some kind of new internal boundaries.

The British government, in particular, has been to the fore in securing a hands-off policy on the part of the UN, cynically portraying the conflict as tribal civil war, which foreign intervention can do nothing to allay, and misrepresenting Bosnia's government as a "Muslim" faction pursuing its own nationalist agenda (whereas, in reality, it is made up of Serbs, Croats and Muslims, embodying long traditions of pluralism, tolerance and integration). Above all, Britain has been most adamant in maintaining an arms embargo that has denied Bosnians the means to defend themselves against far better armed aggressors. It continually urges the Bosnian presidency to negotiate with the aggressors on their terms: in other words, to surrender. Yet a final defeat for Bosnia's defence forces could condemn the surviving Muslim population to extermination—or, at best, a life of dispossession inside their own country, or enforced exile.

We will not be accomplices to such slaughter. We refuse to stand by and allow the forces of barbarism to triumph in Europe. From across a wide range of religious, political and cultural backgrounds, we are joining together to speak out against Britain's cynical policy of passivity and appeasement, in the face of the savagery being unleashed against Bosnia and its people. We call on the British government, working with the UN, to take decisive action at last to stop the suffering.

If Bosnia's survival is to be secured even at this late hour—halting the slaughter, defending the country's sovereignty and integrity, reversing the aggression and restoring the rule of law—the UN must take the necessary military decisions. The arms embargo must be lifted, in order to allow the Republic to exercise its legitimate right to self-defence, enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Air power must be made available under UN auspices to lift the siege of Sarajevo, quell the bombardment of other so-called "safe areas", interdict military supplies, destroy munition stocks, free communication routes, and so on. Some ground troops would be required, but their number need not be large, since the Bosnian army could carry out the essential infantry role and does not lack manpower. One option might be to place the Bosnian army itself under temporary UN command and lift the arms embargo in that context.

But it is not our role to advocate one military course as against another. We are united simply in our commitment to a free and independent Bosnia-Hercegovina; in our insistence that any final settlement must provide for the return of refugees to live safely in their homes (where this is what they wish); and in our conviction that the current western policy of humanitarian relief combined with barren mediation leads only to betrayal of these principles and continued slaughter.

Bosnia's agony, and that of the Balkans, can be ended only when the aggression is reversed. This is a life-and-death matter, first and foremost, for the people of Bosnia itself. But it is of vital interest also for the occupied areas of Croatia; for threatened Kosovo and Macedonia; for neighbouring countries which could be sucked into a wider conflict; for democratic forces in Croatia and Serbia itself; and for the fragile successor states of the USSR. If Britain and the UN do not take swift and appropriate action to preserve Bosnia, the bloodshed will surely intensify and spread throughout the region. Bosnia can still be saved, but only if Europe chooses to defend its stated values of tolerance and coexistence against those of segregation, chauvinism and terror. In this sense, it is also our own future that is at stake in Bosnia-Hercegovina today.

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Pollwatch

Organisation	Pub date	Sample	Con %	Lab %	Lib Dems %	Other %
Gallup/Daily Telegraph	6 August	1,060	23 (24.5)	44.5 (43)	27 (26.5)	5.5 (6)
Gallup 9000/ Daily Telegraph	6 August	9,227	25.4 (24.2)	44.7 (45.8)	24.7 (24.5)	5.2 (5.6)
ICM/Guardian	11 August	1,446	28 (28)	40 (42)	28 (23)	5 (6)
MORI/Times	27 August	1,827	28 (27)	42 (44)	25 (25)	(-)

The previous month's polls are given in brackets

"Poll offers Tories hope of a change in fortunes," according to the headline in the *Times* last week. By their own account, however, this was a rather over-optimistic reading of the situation. All that had happened was that support for the Tories rose by one point to 28 per cent in August, a statistically insignificant blip.

The *Times* noted that that in seven out of ten past years, the Tories have increased their ratings in August, usually by more than one point. The newspaper concluded that the modest revival in Tory fortunes may have reflected nothing more than, "the absence of of most politicians on holiday, which means government policies are disputed less". In that case, support for the government can expect to dip again as soon as normal business is resumed.

The ICM poll in the *Guardian* also placed the Tories on 28 per cent. Labour was on 40 per cent, down two points from the previous month, but far enough in the lead for the newspaper to pronounce that: "More than 180 Conservative MPs would lose their seats if there were an election tomorrow, leaving John Major with the lowest representation since the Reform Act."

Labour would be as foolish to swallow that line as the Tories would be to believe that their fortunes were about to change.

Overall, however, Labour is on a downward slide (from a high position), while the Tories' plunge seems to have halted. They will be particularly relieved to find that they have stopped trailing the Lib Dems in third place, although they are only a nose ahead.

The best news for the Tories was in the small print of the Gallup 9000/*Daily Telegraph* poll. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposition that Labour couldn't do worse than the present government. Gallup found that, if the voters who thought Labour might actually do worse were reassigned to the Tories, the voting intention figures became: Tories 41 per cent; Labour 36 per cent; Lib Dems 18 per cent—unnervingly close to the results of the last election.

The government has been taking soundings of its own about the Citizen's Charter. A survey of 3,000 people found that 28 per cent had never heard of it. That figure rose to over 40 per cent in Wales and Scotland. The best-known individual charters were ones for British Rail and the health service. A clear majorityof respondents thought there had either been no change or a change for the worse in the quality of public services since the Citizen's Charter was introduced.

A MORI poll for the *Times* on 30 August found that only 7 per cent of trade unionists would be certain to join the Labour Party under John Smith's levy-plus system. There are four million levy-payers, so this could net the party an extra 280,000 members, doubling its present size. However, the anti-OMOV camp is bound to seize on these figures as an indication that most trade unionists would drift away from the party.

Kenneth Baker records in his memoirs that Norman Tebbit did not want "Hong Kong Hurd" to succeed Mrs Thatcher. But the British people are more generous-spirited than Hurd, let alone Tebbit, according to a MORI poll for the *South China Morning Post*. Sixty per cent believe that Hong Kong British passport holders should be allowed to take refuge here if things go wrong after 1997.

FELIX BENNETT

The American Mars space probe sent back pictures of a landmark, said to resemble a human face, before cutting off all communication.

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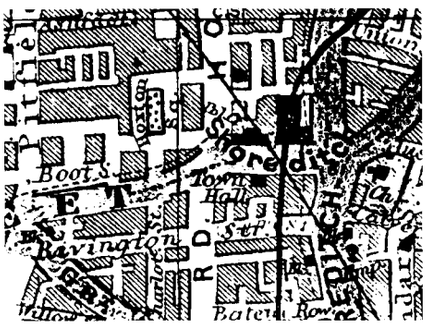
SHOREDITCH TRADE UNION SURVEY SPECIAL



And now (cue drumroll), Shoreditch proudly presents (orchestral fanfare) the results of the 1993 NSS Survey of Trade Union Leaders. Our own trade union beauty contest has, once again, thrown up some interesting results. Seven out of ten trade union leaders support the introduction of a system of one member, one vote for the selection of parliamentary candidates; just over half of all trade union leaders would support OMOV for the election of the Labour leader; and just over half also favour abolishing the trade union block vote at Labour Party conferences. Last year's results (see tables below and right) indicated an even more amenable approach to reform of union links with the Labour Party. But with reform now breathing down their necks, this year's survey shows a distinct hardening towards what Labour's "modernisers" have in mind.

The less friendly relations may also have something to do with the fact that this year John Prescott has soared from eighth to first place in the union leaders' rating of the shadow cabinet. As well as having proved himself a thoroughly effective transport spokesperson, Prescott has been a stout defender of the union link. But then, ratings for the shadow cabinet (we asked for marks out of ten) are down across the board compared to last year. And for the first time, union leaders were either disenchanted or honest enough to admit that they had no recollection whatsoever of lesser-known shadow spokespersons such as Ron Davies, David Clark and Tom Clarke ("No knowledge of him" and "Who on earth he?" were just some of the comments). But poor old Davies et al shouldn't take all the blame for the fact that several general secretaries representing Britain's biggest unions have never heard of them.

When it came to assessing each other, it's clear that the honeymoon period for TUC general secretary-designate John Monks is well under way. Monks topped the poll with an approval rating of seven. It will be interesting to see if in future he plummets as low as Norman Willis, who last year achieved a dismal score of four. Jimmy Knapp (RMT) once again won more esteem than his portrayal in the media would lead one to expect. Ratings for Doug McAvoy (NUT) and Nigel de Gruchy (NASUWT) reflect the well-won admiration for the teachers' leaders, following their victory in the school-tests battle against Education Secretary John Patten. And once again Bill Morris (TGWU) proves to be a hardy perennial in the popularity stakes. See Steve Platt on page 27 for further comment.

How union leaders rate the shadow cabinet:	This year	Last year
John Prescott	6.7	7.1
Robin Cook	6.6	6.8
John Smith	6.3	7.8
Gordon Brown	6	7.9
David Blunkett	6	6.7
Tony Blair	5.9	6.8
Frank Dobson	5.9	5.6
Chris Smith	5.2	5.6
Margaret Beckett	5.1	6.4
Mo Mowlam	4.9	5.5
Jack Straw	4.8	5.6
Harriet Harman	4.7	5.5
Donald Dewar	4.6	5.2
Jack Cunningham	4.4	5.7
Ann Clwyd	4.4	4.9
Michael Meacher	4.4	4.9
Doug Hoyle	3.7	4.4
Ann Taylor	3.6	5.4
Derek Foster	3.4	4.1
Tom Clarke	3.1	4
David Clark	3	4.3
Ron Davies	2.6	3.6

How union leaders rate each other:	This year	Last year
John Monks	7	-
Bill Morris	6.3	5.8
Jimmy Knapp	6	5.7
Doug McAvoy	5.5	4.9
Nigel de Gruchy	5.4	-
Alan Jinkinson	5.4	-
John Edmonds	5.2	6.9
Gavin Laird	5	-
Roger Lyons	4.9	5.3
Tony Dubbins	4.8	2.9
Alan Tuffin	4.6	5.1
Leif Mills	4.3	-
Arthur Scargill	4.3	-
John Sheldon	4.3	-
Tony Young	4.2	-
George Brumwell	4.1	-
Garfield Davies	3.9	-
Barry Reamsbottom	3.5	-

Union leaders who would support:	This year %	Last year %
One member, one vote for the selection of parliamentary candidates	69	83
One member, one vote for the election of the Labour Party leader	55	75
The abolition of the trade union block vote	55	61
The automatic conversion of all political levy-paying trade union members to individual party membership	55	31

FOURTH ESTATE

A regular monitor of the tabloid press

26 August: Better and better! Those absconding mothers were not just heartless and neglectful, but lesbians as well. "Two gay mums dump seven kids to go on hol," says the *Star* succinctly, revealing that the pair met "in a gay bar in Chessington".

In his *Express* column, Bernard Ingham applauds the no-nonsense attitude of new social-work supremo Jeffrey Greenwood. Says Yorkshire-born Ingham, who never misses a chance to mention his birthplace: "I am prejudiced in favour of Greenwoods. There are more of them than acres in Hebden Bridge. Mind you, Jeffrey was probably originally Grunwald since he is vice-president of Jewish Care. But no matter. He is a man to watch." No matter *what*, exactly?

Today deals crisply with the Citizen's Charter. "It is, after all, the Prime Minister's big idea, indeed his only idea. Most of us know the feeling, don't we, when the Boss has a daft idea and insists it's made to work? That is how the whole of Whitehall is feeling as they try to clear up traffic cones and build motorway loos because the Prime Minister said they would."

30 August: Alastair Campbell—late of the *Mirror*, now grandly known as *Today*'s associate editor (politics)—lays into Virginia Bottomley for ruining the NHS. For good measure, he takes a sideswipe at Labour's health spokesperson, David Blunkett, for giving Bottomley an easy time of it—unlike his predecessor Robin Cook. "Blunkett appears to view shadow chancellor Gordon Brown as a bigger enemy than Bottomley," sniffs the loyalist Campbell. "Attacks on colleagues have been a traditional route to a good vote in internal party elections. A good demolition job on Ginny wouldn't do Blunkett any harm either."

The *Mail* advises the Tories "to swallow some of their privatisation pride" and accept the Lords amendment to let BR bid for rail franchises. "In politics," it opines, "there is no such thing as a pain-free climbdown."

31 August: Home Secretary Michael Howard gests a ticking-off from the *Star* for his slogan: "Vigilance not vigilantes." The *Star* calls him "out of touch", and warns that unless the tide of crime can be turned, "the government will have to recognise that people must have the right to defend themselves, their loved ones and their property . . . By whatever force is necessary."

Leaving Michael Jackson aside just for a moment, the *Sun* turns to another man with a headache: John Smith. "As the suntanned socialists return from their holidays in the Med," it reports, "there is no sign of backslapping, only backstabbing." The paper claims that Bryan Gould has turned down an offer of £100,000 to host a political TV show—"hardly the sign of a man who has given up all political ambition". If Smith loses next month's conference battle over the union block vote, the *Sun* suspects he could turn out to be "no more than a flash in the pan".

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There's a long-standing British tradition against the eating of any mushrooms—except for the variety that look like the ones you buy in plastic, polythene-covered containers in Sainsbury's.

There are perfectly understandable reasons for this. If you catch a fish that looks a bit like a perch but isn't, or pick a fruit that looks like an apple but isn't, then the mix-up is unlikely to do you much harm. However, if—as people do every so often—you pick and eat an *Amanita phalloides* (death cap), mistaking it for the not entirely dissimilar *Agaricus campestris* (field mushroom), then the results will be unpleasant. After a delay of between six and 24 hours there will be minor symptoms, followed by severe, recurrent vomiting and diarrhoea. This will be so painful that the sufferer will almost certainly be admitted to hospital. After a day or two, the symptoms will ease and the patient will probably be allowed home, believing they are recovering. A few days later, they will collapse and die. Even if the source of the poisoning is identified at an early stage, the chances of survival are at best only 50-50, and then only with severe kidney damage.

But no sensible mushroom-picker would ever make such a mistake, and I believe there is another reason for the stubborn British refusal to make use of this source of delicious, free food. D H Lawrence expresses the feeling in his poem, *How Beastly the Bourgeois Is*. Like so much by Lawrence, the poem is absurd when bleating generalities about the failings of the English, and then becomes alive when the poet demonstrates his extraordinary perceptiveness about the natural world. The beastly English bourgeois man is, Lawrence notes: "Nicely groomed, like a mushroom/standing there so sleek and erect and eyeable—/and like a fungus, living on the remains of bygone life/sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his own./And even so, he's stale, he's been there too long. Touch him, and you'll find he's all gone inside/just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow under a smooth skin and an upright appearance."

The most apparently poetic phrase in the above passage—"living on the remains of bygone life"—is in fact the most mycologically precise (mycology is the study of mushrooms), reflecting Lawrence's thorough education in natural sciences. Unlike plants, mushrooms have no chlorophyll, and so can't make use of photosynthesis in their growth. Hence, to quote Roger Phillips' indispensable *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of Great Britain and Europe* (published by Pan): "They draw their sustenance ready-made from living or dead plants or even animals."

I spent much of my northern European holiday picking mushrooms, which is code for saying that it rained almost all the time, and that in itself is part of their thrilling creepiness. They grow best when it's wet and warm, and you frequently find the tastiest kinds in places where you feel that wholesome things oughtn't to grow, on moss, on the dry, dark floors of pine forests. One of the finest varieties, the cep, is chunkily reassuring, with a

The texture of meaty snot, the smell of shit. **Sean French** feeds his fancies

rough brown cap like a loaf or the roof of a cottage, yet they always seem on the edge of decay, or over the edge. As Lawrence observed, you can cut an apparently fine specimen open and find it hollow, crawling with maggots, and giving off the pungent odour a dead body might have if left in this warm humidity.

One of the misconceptions of the foodie culture of recent years is the stress on the freshness and wholesomeness of food. It is partially true. There's no charm in an opaquely eyed, disintegrating, three-day-old sardine. But beef achieves its best flavour only as it starts to go off, when it has lost its fresh red bloody colour and started to go grey. Pheasant has to be hung for over a week, and it is virtually going rotten when it achieves a proper flavour.

There are even more extreme versions. A notorious Swedish dish, called *surstromming*, consists of herring that has been soaked for weeks or months in salted water until it has begun to rot. The fish are then canned and the cans are clearly recognisable since they expand because of the gasses released by the continuing fermentation. Notoriously, the fish must be eaten outdoors, for the smell is remarkably similar to human shit. I don't know whether the taste is similar as well because I have never tasted shit, but shit could not be much less palatable. Worse still, once you have consumed it, the fish continues to ferment in your stomach and you begin to burp. The effect is remarkably like farting through your mouth.

If you ever find yourself in Sweden and are invited to a *surstrommingfest*, I urge you to refuse. Based on my experience of eating it, I would claim that it is not entirely pleasant. But there are people who claim to like it, and indeed many of the most wonderful foods almost challenge you to be disgusted by them. I love oysters, but I can see why their texture—a sort of meaty snot—makes people gag. In a world in which people are delicately avoiding red meat, offal can sometimes seem like a deliberate affront, in its unambiguous insistence on what it is that you are eating. There is something almost cannibalistic in the blancmange texture of a young calf's brain, and, as James Joyce noted in the fourth chapter of *Ulysses*, there is an unmistakeable tang of urine in a kidney. You can buy the tongues of baby lambs which still have the grass stains on from their last meal. There's no pretence there. By contrast, the wing of a factory-bred chicken seems positively vegetarian in its neutral taste and its lack of any upsettingly identifiable shape.

Even at their healthiest and most wholesome, mushrooms don't seem to belong to the normal categories of growth. Their speedy proliferation seems itself like a form of decay, and indeed they are related to the sorts of thing that grow on your wallpaper when it is damp, or the green stuff that grows on shower curtains in the houses that students stay in but never clean from one academic year to the next. And there's something decadent about them as well. The most common mushrooms we saw were the most famous of all, the fly agaric, with its almost synthetic pattern of pillar-box red with white spots. This is the mushroom that Mick Jagger uses to destroy James Fox's identity in Nicolas Roeg's *Performance*, and Roger Phillips, in the book quoted above, is coolly informative about the mushroom's hallucinogenic properties: "The cap is dried and swallowed without chewing." Thanks, Rog, man.

Phillips himself tentatively attributes the British reluctance to eat mushrooms to the "deeply ingrained tradition from druidic times that mushrooms contain magical properties and may only be eaten under the control of the Druids". Certainly the most famous mushroom in British culture is the one in Wonderland that makes Alice shrink and grow and on which sits a caterpillar smoking a hookah. That image seems more like something created in the 1960s rather than the 1860s, and indeed in the early 1970s I once saw it carved in the form of a giant candle occupying the place of honour in some incense-ridden shop selling useless hippy junk. For children below the age of about 16, mushrooms are the things they come across in their Super Mario games which are used to alter the size of their protagonist.

Finally, or rather, it is to be hoped, not absolutely finally, you cook the mushrooms and taste this strange sweet chewy texture, which is wonderful, and yet you know exactly why some people cannot bear it at all. And then shouldn't I have some political point to make. D H Lawrence did so wonderfully at the end of his poem: "Standing in their thousands, these appearances, in damp England/what a pity they can't all be kicked over/like sickening toadstools, and left to melt back, swiftly/into the soil of England." Perhaps the Tory party is like one of these toadstools. The problem is that, however often they are kicked over and melt away, they have this uncanny ability to grow back.

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Brown's Thatcherite gobbledegook

I make no apology for returning for the umpteenth time in this space to the subject of Labour's attitude to taxation. Though it is an oversimplification, tax and spend policies are rapidly becoming the focal point in discussing the direction in which John Smith and Gordon Brown are leading the Labour Party. No other item on the party's policy agenda encapsulates the issue so effectively.

This, of course, is partly because public ownership and other once-familiar manifestations of so-called socialism have been banished from the discussion. This is one of the ideological successes of Thatcherism, helped along by the collapse of the Stalinist version of socialism. What we are left with, as the free-marketeering Michael Portillo pointed out in the *Sunday Telegraph* last week, is a generalised argument about the extent to which the state should involve itself in economic and social activity.

In broader terms, this boils down to a question about how much of the country's gross national product should be absorbed by the state. People like Mr Portillo believe it should be as little as possible. Traditionally, so-called Tory "wets" have joined Labour supporters and Lib Dems in holding that it should be as large as is needed to deliver their idea of a civilised society.

This is the debate that is now raging fiercely inside the cabinet and in the Conservative Party as a whole. The argument, to be sure, has been precipitated by the grotesquely large government deficit created by the income tax cuts of successive Tory chancellors, and by the attempt to reduce it in the forthcoming budget. But the issue is, nevertheless, fundamental.

What is so odd about the controversy, however, is that so little that could be described as genuine debate on the subject is taking place inside the Labour Party, or even between the Labour Party and either wing of the government. This may be because the party has simply lost heart after its fourth successive election defeat. But I suspect there is more to it than that: after twice taking a hammering from the Tories because of ambiguities in its tax policies, it looks as if Labour has become too scared of the subject to say anything at all.

This collective loss of bottle has now led Gordon Brown to declare that, far from being the party of high tax-and-spend policies, Labour is now a party that ideally would prefer to cut taxes rather than increase them. While recognising that the party has been out of office so long that a substantial proportion of the electorate no longer has the faintest idea what it is like to live under a Labour government, I still suspect that most voters will respond to that claim with a vulgar guffaw.

The fact that there have been so few guffaws merely underlines the reality that, thanks to the Conservative Party's preoccupation with its own tax-and-spend debate, very few people actually know what Mr Brown said. Not even the Conservative press has made much of his speech, leaving it to papers like the *Guardian* and this august organ to comment on it.

But, even if we leave the ideological issue out of the account, Mr Brown's new coat of Thatcherite paint on the Labour Party's tax policy still looks like a mistake on purely tactical grounds. For here we have the remarkable spectacle of the post-Thatcherite Tory party riven from top to bottom over exactly the question at issue—namely, whether to raise taxes in order to maintain effective services, or cut services in order to maintain low taxes. Yet Mr Brown has chosen this very moment to attach himself, however tentatively, to the right-wing side of the argument. Putting it at its lowest, he has thereby deprived Labour of a God-given opportunity to exploit the Tory split.

By talking about tax cuts, Brown has deprived Labour of a God-given opportunity to exploit the Tory split

But, in any case, we are not entitled to leave the ideological aspect of the matter out of account. Labour is not a party offering the voters the prospect of less government, along the Friedmanite lines argued by Mr Portillo last Sunday. On the contrary, if it is proposing anything, it is proposing more rather than less government—more healthcare, more education, more economic activity, and, above all, more jobs. Can all this be accomplished on lower taxes, or even the same taxes that exist now?

I suspect that ordinary voters, whatever their party affiliation, are already fairly sure they know the answer to that one. Never mind that Mr Brown can truthfully claim that he was only expressing a distant aspiration when he muttered that throwaway phrase about wanting to cut taxes in the improbable event of suitable circumstances arising one hap-hap-happy day. His intention was clear enough: he was trying to jettison Labour's image as a congenital tax-and-spend party and to book a ticket on Mr Portillo's bandwagon. Alas, it won't wash.

Of course, it is just possible that Mr Brown, though a son of the manse, is simply telling whoppers about his intentions. Indeed, there is a school of thought in the upper reaches of the party that says, only half in jest, that it is time Labour stopped telling the truth all the time and started telling a few old-fashioned lies, just like its more successful opponents. But somehow I doubt if decent, honest Mr Brown subscribes to the "Tell a lie for Labour" tendency. The really bad news is that he almost certainly means just what he says.

That is why I do not share the *NSS*'s rather prissy disapproval of Bryan Gould in last week's leader. Mr Gould is at least doing something about launching a decent, comradely discussion of the issues, unlike far too many of his somnambulistic colleagues. If I have a criticism of him, it is that he has been too silent for too long.

So let us also welcome the entry into the debate of David Blunkett—who, unlike Gould, is still a member of John Smith's shadow cabinet—in a speech delivered in Sheffield last week. Mind you, the speech got even less publicity than Mr Brown's, which provides another explanation for the paucity of genuine debate in the modern Labour Party. The pathetic truth is that even the capitalist press is bored by Labour's arguments, and doesn't report them any longer.

But there is perhaps a better reason why Mr Blunkett's speech got so little attention. To put it crudely, political journalists may have missed the fact that it was an expression of dissent for the simple reason that it was written in code. Reporters grew accustomed during the 1980s to coded attacks on Thatcherism delivered by "wet" cabinet ministers like Peter Walker. It is a new phenomenon in the Labour Party.

But consider the following: "Achieving improvement for the wider community and not merely for the individual . . . has to be central objective of Labour policy in the years ahead. It is our job to argue for a new agenda rather than to accept the existing orthodoxies. We must shape thinking and not merely be shaped by the dogmas of the last decade."

Unexceptionable, you may feel, and perhaps even a tiny bit boring? Well, no, actually. I may be wrong, but my codebook translates it as: "We've had enough of this Tory nonsense about the individual from you, Brown. Stop talking Thatcherite gobbledegook and start talking socialism again." To which I gratefully append the words "Hear! Hear!" In invisible ink, of course.

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Croats jump gun on Bosnia

Once again the Croat leaders in Bosnia-Hercegovina have jumped the gun. By proclaiming the "Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna" on 28 August, they and their overlords in Croatia acted as if the "Union of Republics of Bosnia-Hercegovina" had already leapt off the conference table at Geneva and into three-dimensional life.

The same leaders did the same thing last January with the abortive plan conceived by Cyrus Vance and David Owen. But whereas Vance-Owen was territorially generous to the Croats, the current scheme put together by Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg grants them much less: 17 per cent—the same proportion of land as the Croat share of the population in prewar Bosnia-Hercegovina. Indeed, the new homemade "republic" did not endorse the Owen-Stoltenberg plan straightaway, in the hope of cadging a bit more territory at Geneva before it gives its assent.

The proclamation is a typical case of unilateral diplomacy. Mate Boban, leader of the Bosnia Croats, and his masters want the confederal "union" option to be irreversible: no chipping away by the western powers at even this 17 per cent, and no backsliding toward the unitary-state option upheld by the vestigial government in Sarajevo. The chances of the latter happening are, of course, slimmer than slim; but the Croats are paranoid these days. The press abounds with rumours about British agents starting the fight between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia, and one of President Franjo Tudjman's inner circle recently mentioned, as if stating the obvious, the London-Paris-Moscow axis against Croatia.

This paranoia is officially disseminated, therefore, from above, to confuse people about the international condemnation of Croat atrocities against Muslims. And people listen, because the western states' entire operation in former Yugoslavia is so contradictory and hypocritical that there surely has to be a hidden rationale. The mere fact of immense military might, unused, is deeply suspect here.

Boban's other motive was more concrete. His forces are barely holding their own against the mainly Muslim forces loyal to the Sarajevo government, and the Owen-Stoltenberg map gives the Croats more in central Bosnia than they can hold by arms, on present performance.

Finally, Boban and Tudjman wanted to nip domestic misgivings in the bud. Short term, they will succeed: few in Croatia will dare to openly question a "Republic of Herceg-Bosna", even though it abandons almost half a million Croats in the rest of Bosnia-Hercegovina and opens the way to partitioning Croatia itself on similar lines. Tudjman's denial of this latter point show him at his hectoring and dogmatic worst. Perhaps he really cannot grasp that the western powers will be delighted with the precedent; perhaps he believes Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's opportunist remarks, in their bilateral talks at Geneva, that Croatia's rebel Serbs must negotiate a solution with Zagreb.

For Milosevic is desperate to get sanctions against Serbia lifted, and he will say anything to that end. Deeds, however, are more difficult, and it is one of Milosevic's fortunes that his Croatian counterpart, stupified by archaic obsessions, cannot see how the Serbian dictator is not free to make peace with his neighbours even if he wanted it.

The beauty of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan is, from this point of view, that it should bring the dividend of victory without the cost of peace. The sanctions will probably be lifted, without any risk of the conflict being extinguished. For the envisaged "union" will be the most rickety structure imaginable: a colony of a nonexistent empire—the United Nations—where bloody gobbets of tribal land are separated by fading lines of pale blue helmets. If it all somehow hangs together, Milosevic has his source of permanent tension. If it rends, he has the same. Either way, Greater Serbia is bagged.

The rending, when it comes, will probably happen first along the Croat-Muslim frontier. The Croats are mad that they don't control all of Mostar, the "capital" of their "republic", where the local loyalist commander saw what was coming and dug in. The proposed compromise of the European Community running the city for two or three years—pending what?—does not bode well.

But it's not just Mostar. On or near this boundary, on the Owen-Stoltenberg map, lie Stolac (site of a Croat starvation camp for Muslims), Jablanica (where Croat forces were humiliated), Novi Travnik, Gornji Vakuf and Donji Vakuf, the sites of terrible fighting.

Adding to Muslim grievances, they will have no corridor to the sea. Just Tudjman's promise of access to the port of Place. However many thousands of blue helmets are guiltily deployed in the "union", it will not be viable; nor can its units survive independently. So the "Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna" will have a short and brutal life before absorption into the national state. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Muslims, who never wanted a Muslim state, will be Islamised during the struggle for sheer survival, and Tudjman, misruling his own confederation by then, will say "I told you so." In fact, he's doing it already, praising his policy for exposing the fundamentalists.

Mark Thompson

10 YEARS AGO

"Time is running out"
9 September 1983

The New Statesman conmments on the implications of the shooting down by Soviet fighters of Korean Airlines Flight 007

The KAL incident provides us with a direct example of the lethal dangers of the latest phase of the nuclear and space arms race—provoked in large measure by the paranoid policies of the Reagan administration.

That danger lies in the evident fact that at a moment of military crisis under conditions of modern warfare there is no longer any practical possibility of political control of events. We do not know whether there was any Soviet political authorisation of the military decision to shoot down the Korean airliner. But it is clear Mr Andropov only knew of what was potentially the most dangerous recent US-Soviet incident after the event.

If this is what happens in situations where communications systems are still functioning normally and the eventual decision about whether to fire or not can be spread over matters of hours, consider what the reality would be in the opening stages of a potential nuclear conflict. If it ever came to it, the critical decisions would be have to be made in minutes or even seconds. In such circumstances, the duty of the military on both sides would be to act according to their standing instructions. Mass mutual suicide would be the result.

PLO and Israel change tack

It must be very frustrating to be one of the negotiators at the Middle East peace talks in Washington. For 22 months, they have been attempting to reach an agreement, using all their diplomatic skills, but without success. Just as they were about to start another hard, and apparently hopeless, round of talks, they were told that the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation had done a deal in a secret meeting the other side of the Atlantic.

The breakthrough in Norway is the result of two changes: PLO chairman Yasser Arafat's adoption of a plan for a step-by-step approach to Palestinian autonomy in the Occupied Territories; and an Israeli decision to drop objections to talking directly with the PLO (the Palestinian delegates at the Washington talks merely take instructions from the PLO), a move that gave the negotiators in Norway vastly increased authority.

If the deal, backed this week by the Israeli cabinet and the PLO executive, goes ahead, Israel and the PLO will recognise one another and the PLO will renounce terrorism. As a first step towards a final settlement, the Israeli

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NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

army will withdraw from the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho in the West Bank, handing control to appointed Palestinian administrations with their own police forces. The PLO has agreed to defer discussion of the status of Jerusalem and to allow Israel continued jurisdiction over the Occupied Territories. There is no mention of whether Palestinians in exile will have a right to return.

Whether the deal actually leads to a lasting settlement is, however, an open question. Both sides have to overcome a long and bitter history of animosity and violence.

The agreement is supposed to create new conditions on the ground in a series of small steps that are neither too threatening to Israelis nor too insignificant for Palestinians. The idea is that the sight of the Israeli army withdrawing from Gaza and Jericho should prove an enormous moral boost for the Palestinians, without frightening most Israelis.

But there are worries among Israelis about the Palestinian police force which is supposed to take over from the Israeli army when it leaves: the government has a major job on its hands to persuade its people that it will be able to guarantee their security.

On the other side, the PLO will have to work hard to persuade Palestinians that the new arrangements really do mean an improvement in their conditions, particularly in Gaza, where the PLO has lost support to radicals who reject any dealings with Israel. If the PLO fails to keep control of Gaza, Israeli public opinion will turn against any agreement.

Already, groups on both sides are noisily protesting against the deal. On the Israeli side, this week has witnessed uproar from the opposition Likud party in a special session of the Knesset and demonstrations outside Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office and in Jericho. Meanwhile, rejectionist Palestinians called a general strike in certain areas of the Occupied Territories which appears to have been solidly supported.

These expressions of anger and defiance will almost certainly escalate in the coming months, and it would be foolish to rule out the possibility of violence errupting. Nevertheless, there is an undoubted desire for change among both Israelis and Palestinians. If the step-by-step approach is accompanied by measures to encourage economic development and job creation, it could just be that this week we have seen a real turning point for the whole of the Middle East.

Daphna Vardi

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LETTER FROM EAST TIMOR

The uneasy calm of Dili, capital of East Timor, is reminiscent of Bucharest under Ceausescu. The feeling that there is at least one pair of eyes watching you closely does not go away until you leave.

Indonesian soldiers are everywhere and people are frightened to talk to foreigners or even to be seen in their company. A courageous young East Timorese girl, who lives in Australia and is visiting her family in Dili, accepts our invitation for coffee in return for helping us find our way in the bank. But before we can drink the coffee, a fierce-looking Sumatran approaches our table and begins hurling questions at us in broken English. "Why are you here?" "How long will you stay?" "How do you know each other?" referring to the girl. His less-than-courteous manner turns into downright anger when he addresses the girl in Bahasa, Indonesian, and she politely replies that she does not speak it. He leaves after realising that we are not prepared to answer any more of his questions. "I worry about my family here. Once I go back, they will suffer for all my actions," says the girl in a whisper.

It is through whispers that you get a wider picture of what is happening here, nearly 18 years after Indonesia invaded what was then Portuguese Timor following a declaration of independence by the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN). Before anyone utters a syllable, he or she looks around about three or four times. "People disappear every day here, and no one can do anything about it." On Saturday evening, at sunset on the beach, two women light a small fire and begin to pray. As I watch inquisitively, a voice whispers: "They are praying for a lost son and brother, whose body was found dumped in the sea recently, after he was taken away by the authorities."

Every village we pass has a military post at its entrance. In between, the hills are dotted with radio antennae

Our request to hire a car at the hotel reception is politely turned down. The head of the tourist office, again very politely, says that he will try his best to find one. But "his best" does not work. Without a car, you have to go around by public transport or hire a taxi—and each time we stop a taxi, someone approaches the driver and tries to put him off. Luckily, my friend is a fluent speaker of Bahasa and eventually manages to negotiate a ride. Suddenly, everything falls into place.

Driving eastward to Baucau along the coast road, every village we pass has a military post at its entrance. In between the villages, the hills are dotted with radio antennae. Not even a fly could travel this road without being detected by the military. Alongside the road, there are small clusters of tin-roofed houses, lived in, according to the authorities, by people who have been moved from the interior of the country "to protect them from the terrorists". The "terrorists" are FRETILIN guerrillas still fighting in the mountains, against all odds and in depleted numbers. Their leader, Xanana Gusmao, was jailed for life in May, after a three-month trial described as a farce by human rights groups. His sentence was reduced to 20 years last month after an international outcry.

The Indonesian government says that it has spent large sums of money to improve the infrastructure of East Timor since 1975. But roads have been built only in areas where there are military bases, and the new schools ensure that Bahasa is taught throughout, while Portuguese and Tetun (the indigenous language) are eradicated. There are no statistics about the number of schools that have been closed down. Other apparent improvements, including upgraded hospitals, have the sole function of attracting settlers from the rest of Indonesia. Most of the senior posts in East Timor are held by Javanese and, for all the infrastructural changes, the standard of living of East Timorese has deteriorated during the past 18 years.

Coffee, one of the main crops in the region, is marketed by the army. A Timorese family living abroad has tried time and time again to start up a business for exporting coffee, and each time it has been told that it can only do so if it sets up joint ventures with companies that are fronts for the army's commercial activities in East Timor.

For the East Timorese, the Catholic Church is the only institution that provides a refuge for their cultural, political and spiritual aspirations—and there are certain limitations even to its role. There are far more Catholics in Indonesia than in East Timor, and the Vatican has given only half-hearted support to the East Timorese. It is up to local priests to comfort and stand by a people that have seen more than 200,000 of their number (one third of the total population) vanish. According to one priest, since 1976 the number of practising Catholics has increased from 30 per cent of the population to 95 per cent. The church service is the only place where Timorese are allowed to gather. Even then, vans with darkened windows are parked outside.

The harsh Indonesian occupation has created an atmosphere of resentment—especially among the young—that has reached the point of no return. The Santa Cruz cemetery massacre of November 1991 reinforced the Timorese view that it is impossible for them to accept Jakarta's rule. "If we are all arrested and even killed, the ghosts of the people killed in Santa Cruz will be there to fight for us," says one Timorese.

Ani King Underwood

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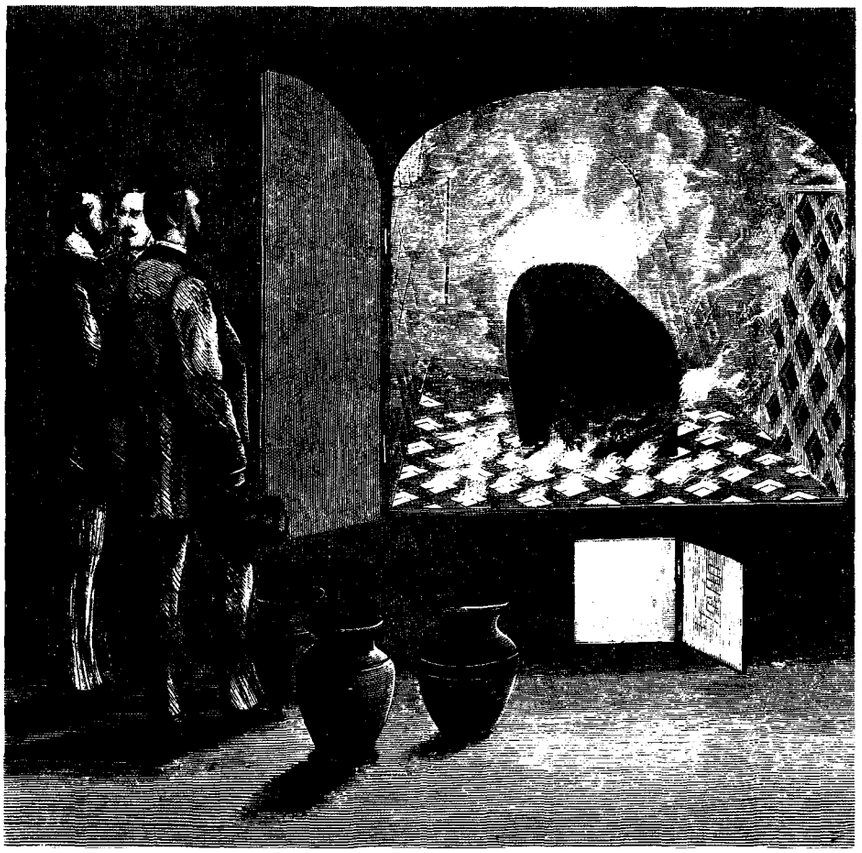

1874: Royal surgeon Sir Henry Thompson demonstrates the new techniques from Italy

Mary Evans Picture Library

What really happens at a cremation? **Kirsty Milne** goes behind the scenes to look at coffins, corpses, and whether your loved one's ashes end up in the right urn

Facing up to the burning issues

"Do you want to see one with a body in it?"

We are in a large tiled basement, gleaming with stainless steel like an institutional kitchen. Above us is a grid of huge silver pipes and smaller yellow ones. The cremators are Swedish-made and computerised: very hi-tech. Beside them, the coffin waiting on a trolley looks prim and antiquated.

You cannot fault the cremation movement for *glasnost*. Nothing is off limits; there is nothing you cannot see. Forget the cringeing Dickensian decorum of the funeral parlour: Jon Luby, a genial Mancunian, was taking me round his crematorium much as a businessman might show you round his factory.

The cremation room atmosphere is not reverent but practical. Coffins come down in a lift from the chapel, are shoved onto trolleys and wheeled through to wait for an empty cremator. They carry a handwritten name-tag, like a place-name card at dinner. It sits in a slot on the cremator. "The card, the card," says Luby, slicing his arm through the air. He is battling against the widespread assumption that the ashes collected by your grieving relatives are not necessarily yours: that they are, in fact, any old ashes.

We examine the evidence. Each cremator has a neat little chute and a collecting drawer at the bottom. It would be tricky to mix the ashes. "If people believe these stories," says Luby, "I find it amazing that they still want to be cremated."

He flips the shuttered glass porthole of a cremator that isn't empty. The self-sealing doors closed round a coffin a quarter of an hour earlier. A red digital display shows the temperature as 950 C°.

In such intense heat, the coffin burns away in 10 or 15 minutes. What you see is a clearly defined skeleton, ribs crumbling away to look like twigs. It lies very still on a bed of ashes in the roaring orange heat. A piece of plastic from the coffin flaps slightly near the skull. Everything is flaking, disintegrating, into soft dove-grey ash.

After an hour and a quarter, the skeleton is reduced to bones or bits of bones, no more than six inches long. They are pulverised in a stainless steel "cremulator", which batters them with ball-bearings and forces them through a mesh. In a small side room, polythene bags of ashes—still with name tags—sit in plastic potting-shed boxes. They look mundane and small.

"Most people find that a very traumatic experience," says Luby briskly, as we go upstairs into the light. He gets a lot of visitors. Manor Park, in East London, is the biggest crematorium in the UK. Owned by the City of London Corporation, it carries out 4,800 cremations a year, where a normal "crem" would manage about 1,800. Luby, Manor Park's superintendent, is also secretary of the Federation of British Cremation Authorities, and hugely knowledgeable about his business. He first went to work in a crematorium in 1963, when he was 19. "I was waiting for a position in the police."

"Do you tell people what you do?"

"At parties, I say I'm a local government officer."

The profession, he explains, is equally divided between the devout and the doubtful. "I follow humanist principles. I don't get depressed about death, but I know my own mortality. I'm reminded of it 46 times a day."

Luby is a trained counsellor, specialising in the deaths of children. "You couldn't treat this just as a job. You would go mad, dealing with so much death and grief every day. You need a personal commitment to cremation, a belief in how it should be carried out. It's a chance to help people through the most traumatic experience of their lives."

I would not, personally, want to be counselled at a crematorium. Usually you want to get away as fast as possible, without any backward glances at the chimney. There is no aesthetic incentive to stay, since crematoria do not rank among Britain's architectural glories. Luby rates Ayr and Shrewsbury for their good looks. But Manor Park, with its 1970s mazy concrete grilles, cannot compete.

If you want a nice environment and a bit of history, it's probably best to be cremated at Woking, the oldest crematorium in the country. Built in a pleasing, red-brick, Gothic style, it boasts an ivy-covered chimney, 60 feet high. Woking is a monument to the hygienic aspirations of a group of eminent Victorians, who campaigned for cremation at a time when it was considered a barbaric practice with heathen connotations.

Sir Henry Thompson, surgeon to Queen Victoria, set up the Cremation Society in 1874. The royal connection can't have hurt. Thompson's founder members included Anthony Trollope, John Everett Millais, and John Tenniel, illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland*. Thompson argued that the population explosion was choking graveyards and spreading disease. Doctors had been toying with cremation in Italy; Thompson's mission was to bring it to Britain.

In 1879, the society built a crematorium at Woking. It seemed the perfect place. Nearby was Brookwood cemetery, famous for the "death train" which conveyed coffins and

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mourners from a special siding at Waterloo. But when an experimental horse was burnt, locals were upset. The Home Secretary imposed a ban, and the crematorium sat empty.

Five years later, Dr William Price of Glamorgan was arrested for trying to cremate the body of his baby son in a tub of paraffin. He was acquitted, and the Cremation Society swung into action. First up for the Woking experience was Jeanette Caroline Pickersgill, who died of pneumonia at the age of 71. She was cremated on 26 March 1885. The *Surrey Advertiser* remarked on the "volumes of smoke", and the behaviour of four gentlemen who were seen peering inside the coke-fired furnace "like children at a peep show in the street". The paper added: "The remarks of the bystanders were not the most appropriate to accompany the disposal of the dead."

A social trend had started. A second crematorium opened at Manchester in 1892, a third at Glasgow three years later. Thomas Hardy was cremated in 1928; Ramsay MacDonald in 1937; William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1944. Municipal crematoria sprang up like mushrooms. In 1968, for the first time, cremations outnumbered burials. Sir Henry Thompson's ghost had triumphed.

Cremation now covers 70 per cent of all "disposals". It is cheaper than burial. But Jon Luby suggests another reason for this runaway success. "It relieves people of obligation. With a grave you have to visit the thing, wash it, look after it. With cremation, that doesn't happen." A lot of people don't even want the ashes. Only a third are taken away—and these are often scattered at another crematorium, not cosseted on the mantelpiece at home.

Muslims and Orthodox Jews forbid cremation, and the Pope banned it until 1963 (it was thought disrespectful, and associated with atheism). Some older Catholics still dislike the idea. But it is normal for Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Hindus like to stay with the coffin until the last possible moment. At Manor Park, there are special windows where they can watch it going into the cremator.

Jon Luby does not get similar requests from non-Hindus. Even the tradition of watching the coffin sliding down a chute or being lowered out of sight—intended to symbolise earth burial—has been modified. It was considered "too traumatic", he says. Most crematoria now have curtains drawn in front of the coffin.

"Everyone cremates differently. A cancer sufferer burns more slowly. People go quicker if they're fat"

At Woking, nothing so tawdrily theatrical occurs. The minister presses a buzzer, discreetly located beneath the lectern. That is the signal for cremation technician Philip Morley—unseen on the other side of the wall—to wind the coffin through from an elaborate catafalque onto a plain trolley. "The majority of people think it's going straight into the furnace," he says. "You hear them afterwards saying, 'Oh, did you see the flames?'"

Backstage facilities are basic in comparison with Manor Park. There are just two manually operated cremators. Because Woking is a small place, Morley sometimes gets a coffin containing someone he knows. He and his assistant have a gentlemen's agreement that, in such a case, the other will take over.

Morley went to school across the road, where they used to stare at the chimney and wonder. His friends tease him about it now. "It's a good talking point. Once people find out what you do, they won't leave you alone. I was coming back from a football match in Manchester the other day, and two policemen were quizzing me all the way on the train.

"I've only seen two bodies in the 14 years I've worked here. I wouldn't want to, anyway. I've had offers from undertakers to work for them, but I'm too squeamish."

He is not too squeamish to reveal trade secrets. "Everyone cremates differently. A cancer sufferer burns more slowly and burns black. People go quicker if they're fat."

Next to the cremulator, a bucket rattles with iron pins and nuggets from artificial joints and limbs. Jewellery is locked in a special box, then ceremonially buried in an unmarked spot. Until the late 1960s, says Luby, local authorities "used to sell it and put the money towards the rates". Philip Morley's bugbear is clothes. "It's clothes that make the smoke. We had someone in a donkey jacket the other day, and we've had a Scotsman in all his tartan. Of course we don't see what's in the coffins, but we know because we've started to ask questions. If there's smell and smoke, we confront the undertaker and ask, 'What was in there then?'

"People shouldn't be wearing anything, just a shroud. But undertakers don't want to tell the families that. I'd like it made law, so we could insist."

Smoke matters. People complain, and there is the chance of a visit from the environmental health officer. "If the process is working properly, there shouldn't be any smoke," says Luby. But he admits that some provincial crematoria "aren't even up to the standard of the 1956 Clean Air Act".

He ought to know. Cremation is self-policing, with the federation carrying out its own inspections."It's in our interests that the cremation movement should be spotless," says Luby. But what if it's not? Although the Home Office has reserve powers, none of the UK's 227 crematoria has ever been closed down. By 1998, they will have to comply with the stricter emission standards of the 1990 Environmental Protection Act, which means buying expensive new cremators. What if crematoria are tempted to cut corners, or to raise prices unreasonably? Who will protect the public?

At present, Morley himself is the best reassurance the cremation movement can offer. A normal person doing what he terms "a good responsible job": neither simpering nor ghoulish, but cheerfully candid.

The candour can be uncomfortable. We are surveying the rows of "cremated remains", ranging in weight from 5lb to 7lb, when Morley picks up a container and gestures in my direction. "You're small: small-boned like me. You and I would come up to about here." And he shows me the level of my future ashes.

INFLUENCES

GLENYS KINNOCK
Labour candidate for the European Parliament

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?
The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir; *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf; *Has Man a Future*? by Bertrand Russell; *The Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing; *In Place of Fear* by Aneurin Bevan; *Naught for your Comfort* by Trevor Huddleston; and the words of George Orwell, Nadine Gordimer, Susan George, A J P Taylor, and lots more.

Name one film, one poem and one song or piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.
Film: The Olivier version of *Wuthering Heights*.
Poem: "Strange Meeting" by Wilfred Owen.
Song: "Imagine" by John Lennon.

What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?
In 1956, at the time of Suez, I realised what colonialism meant when my dad explained to me that it was "their canal". The internationalist aspects of socialism have remained central to my political beliefs.

Which political figure, living or dead, do you most admire?
Archbishop Trevor Huddleston is the most admirable person I have ever been privileged enough to know. At 80 he is still sparkling with fun, still spreading vitality and still fierce for freedom. He has a clear vision and the strongest commitment to a free and democratic South Africa and to redressing the imbalance between rich and poor in our world.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?
I would choose to have been aware (I was aged one at the time) that Labour had won the general election when the final results were known on 26 July 1945. Thanks to that government, I and millions of others enjoyed the opportunities and freedoms never previously known.

What do you consider to be the greatest threat to the freedom and liberty of the individual?
Racism, sexism and all forms of bigotry and intolerance.

On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?
Those of Neil Kinnock, Jan Royall, Fiona Millar and Eva Tutchell.

Who is the greatest Prime Minister we never had?
Neil Kinnock.

If you could pass one law, what would that law be?
If I could pass one law, it would be an Act requiring the government to ensure aid to the developing world amounting to no less than the United Nations recommended level of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product.

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E P Thompson died peacefully on 28 August in his garden, aged 69, after several years of serious illness. **Sheila Rowbotham** celebrates his life

E P Thompson: a life of radical dissent

Some individuals are able to encompass a vast and varied range of human experience and ideas in their work, while also attending to a particular life or specific event with an intuitive depth. This is a gift usually possessed by great creative writers, less commonly by political thinkers or historians.

Transcending boundaries, E P Thompson managed to express understanding and perception from many aspects. He wrote and loved poetry, especially Blake, Yeats and Wordsworth. He crafted prose to sniff out meaning, reveal cant and pretension, shaping thoughts that could only be dimly glimpsed. His language pressed at the limits of what could be sensed or conceived, and shifted patterns of feeling and assumption

Action and ideas were closely linked. As a young man he fought in the second world war, writing of war and the death of forgotten men in Europe. Joining the Communist Party as a student at Cambridge after the war, he was forced to leave in 1956 after challenging Stalinism's oscillation between authoritarian axioms and cynical realpolitik. E P Thompson's work in the new left of the 1950s and 1960s combined moral vision and theoretical substance, bringing a critique of cultural values to an analysis of the material injustices of postwar society. At odds, both with the remote and abstract theorising of *New Left Review* and with the dismissal of reason within some strands of the late 1960s student movement, he attempted to recharge a democratic socialism with Raymond Williams and Dorothy Thompson in the May Day Manifesto.

During the 1970s, awareness of corporate pressure in the universities, and the growing power of the state, disturbed him greatly. As a teacher at the Centre for Social History at the University of Warwick, he supported the students' protest against the tailoring of studies to industry's needs, resigning in 1971. In 1978 he contested the state's screening of its affairs in the ABC Official Secrets Trial. The 1980s saw the rise of a new anti-nuclear movement. He drafted the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Appeal and, along with Dorothy Thompson, built the movement through speaking, writing and organising.

E P Thompson was influenced by a creative engagement with Marx's insights about the impact of capitalism. This relationship to what he called "the Marxist tradition" involved stringent criticism of the occlusive aspects of Marxism and its claim to be all-knowing. He tussled with respect for Marx's own thinking and a rejection of a Marxism presented as a self-validating core of rectitude. For Thompson, there was no confidence in an inevitable progress of objective forces, no reassuring science of society. Instead, he insisted upon human beings' responsibility.

In a poem "The Place Called Choice" in 1950, he reflected on the interweaving of the past with the present; the hands of a Roundhead soldier on his musket when ordered to shoot Levellers refusing to serve in Ireland, or a weaver straining by rush light to read Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. He returned to pay tribute to those on "the abandoned road of memory" in 1963 in *The Making of the English Working Class*, devoting 848 pages to rescuing stockingers, Luddite croppers, obsolete handloom weavers and supporters of religious movements "from the enormous condescension of posterity". Too ignoble for conservatives, too archaic for modernisers, lacking consolidated institutions and failing to qualify as fully fledged proletarians for labour and Marxist historians, at last they found their chronicler.

In his account, industrial capitalism tears through the existence of human beings, yet they are always themselves present, striving, deliberating and rebelling, hewing out of exploitation another possibility. *The Making of the English Working Class* combines analysis with narrative. Both passionate and scholarly, it is marked by the experience of living through the McCarthy period—which made the survival of a radical tradition of such interest—by the break with Stalinism and by teaching at the Leeds extra-mural department. "Give me the chalk Mr Thompson," said a miner student in one class on the history of mining, and proceeded to draw intricate diagrams on the board. Not simply knowledge, but an approach to knowing was communicated by working-class scholars.

He continued to grapple with the relation between theory and experience, culture and material life in his blast against the segregation of theory and practice, *The Poverty of Theory*, in 1978. Theory, he insisted, was never devoid of experience, while experience was not apart from human culture. Against an arid and arrogant concept of "theory", he was creating a history that explored the complexity of "the invisible and visible rules of social regulation, hegemony and deference", along with symbolic forms of domination and of resistance. This search resulted in works on the law, crime, land struggles, popular divorce in *Whigs and Hunters* and *Albion's Fatal Tree*, in 1975 and the essays collected in *Customs in Common*, in 1991.

E P Thompson said of Marx in *The Poverty of Theory*, "In taking us across a threshold he leaves us at a door." Yet, in his own writing, he was also uncovering not only the problems Marx left behind, but the insights he discarded. He pursued these in several historical essays, examining for instance how Mary

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Wollstonecraft's ideas were handed down by romantics like Shelley and Owenite utopias, and how a washerwoman, Mary Collier, observed her position in an 18th-century poem from the standpoint of both class *and* gender. Returning to his earliest book on William Morris, he questioned the suppression within both Marxism and labourism of a vocabulary of desire. A decade later, in the introduction to *Customs in Common*, he observed: "As capitalism (or 'the market') made over human nature and human need, so political economy and its revolutionary antagonist came to suppose that this economic man was for all time. We stand at the end of a century when this must now be called in doubt."

Links to the dissidents of eastern and central Europe and the former Soviet Union resisting the communist version of economic man were renewed and reestablished in the 1980s through END, and continued in the work of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, which is still struggling for detente from below despite nationalisms and ethnic cleansing.

Characteristically, E P Thompson went backwards to go forwards, and in going forwards kept looking back, wondering how human perception had been altered by capitalism, always aware, in the words of Thomas McGrath, a poet he admired, of "the charm which the potential has". Radical dissent, anti-imperialism and a vision of a socialist Europe were part of his heritage. His father, a Methodist missionary in India, opposed the British, his brother died fighting for the Bulgarian partisans. Methodism, too, left its mark—he groaned sometimes under its sense of duty.

Far too mischievous though for sanctimony, he persistently delighted the young who were invariably unaware that the man with the cricket bat, stroking the cat or clearing leaves in the garden was one of the great thinkers of our time. I met him when I was 19 and loved and respected him for his sense of fun, his kindness, patience and intellectual courage. Those pale blue-green eyes and the hand through the shock of grey hair are unforgettable. So, too, is the snort of irreverent laughter. He was all too aware how speedily "sand silts the narrow roads". With all his might, he struggled to keep open the common footpaths of radical inquiry. Even in moments of despair, he persistently pitted himself against seemingly invincible forces, knowing that so many others had taken the risks of commitment. This great travelling delegate has passed on, leaving us with instructions from the Corresponding Society of 1795. "You are wrestling with the Enemies of the Human Race, not for yourself merely, for you may not see the full Day of Liberty, but for the Child hanging at the Breast."

Edward Palmer Thompson born 3 February 1924. Produced the "Reasoner", the "New Reasoner" and worked on the "New Left Review". Books include "William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary", 1955; "The Making of the English Working Class", 1963; "Whigs and Hunters", 1875; "Albion's Fatal Tree", 1975; "The Poverty of Theory", 1978; "Writing by Candlelight", 1980; "Protest and Survive", 1980; "Heavy Dancers", 1985; "Sykaos Papers", 1988; "Customs in Common", 1991

Penguin Books Ltd. deeply regrets the death of E.P Thompson, undoubtedly the greatest British historian of the latter half of this century.

His radicalism and fierce intellectual independence, manifest in his tireless contribution to the peace movement, and in his books *The Making of the English Working Class, Whigs and Hunters*, and *Customs in Common*, will be greatly missed.

Edward Thompson's voice as a historian, and a campaigner for peace and civil liberties will be sorely missed.

Merlin Press were planning a volume of essays in honour of E.P. Thompson written by his former students. *Protest and Survival* is at the printers and will be published in October as planned.

Shortly before his death Edward had tidied up a collection of historical essays and sent them off to us. These will be published next year.

No epitaph could be more suitable than the lines written by Edward's brother Frank:–

Write on these stones no words of sadness,
–Only the gladness due
That we who asked the most of living
Knew how to give it too.

Merlin Press

AMA

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24th September 1993

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With local and European elections in 1994, an accurate register is essential. This seminar asks why it is so important and suggests ways of achieving it.

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Philip Bassett and **Alan Cave** argue that, if unions are ever again to make themselves relevant to employees and employers, they must embrace the marketplace

Time to take the unions to market

"Labor gives off now an almost animal sense of weakness. Concessions, de-certs, shutdowns. It's like the Italian army in 1918: cars breaking down, baggage getting lost, officers getting fired on by their own troops. I joined organised labor, and we just started retreating."

This is a US labour lawyer, Harvard graduate Thomas Geoghegan, writing in his best-selling American book, *Which Side Are You On?* Its sub-title puts the thrust of his key union insiders' work even better: *Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back* (Plume, New York) Geoghegan talks about "the secret world of organised labor", and how he's embarrassed to say at parties he works for the unions, how his mother advises him to say: "Just tell people you work for the poor. It makes it all simpler."

President Bill Clinton is easing such union embarrassment in the US by means of a specially-appointed commission, packed with pro-union academics and former union leaders—though even this is expected next year to recommend new, works-council style workplace representation to run alongside traditional trade-union bargaining.

In Britain, where public policy against trade unionism is running no less deep now than it has been since the Conservatives came to power in 1979 on a wave of anti-unionism, there are no such fig leaves to cover the embarrassment, the retreat, the animal weakness of organised labour here. Trying to be for the unions when they are flat on their backs is now as hard in the UK as it is in the US.

As it meets next week in Brighton, the annual Trade Union Congress will try to get the British public to be for the unions, even though they are flat on their backs. Under the clever and able John Monks, who will be elected unopposed next week to succeed Norman Willis as the TUC's general secretary, the unions have their best chance to translate the still-high public poll support into the members they desperately need. Some in the unions believe Monks, a TUC insider for almost 25 years, is capable and indeed eager for the substantial change that still looks necessary for Britain's unions to survive, let alone thrive; some doubt it is even possible.

Geoghegan puts it well about the TUC's opposite number in the US. "Sometimes, as a mental exercise," he muses, "I try to think about the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] in the year 2001. But I cannot do it. The whole idea is too perverse."

One of the reasons he identifies as being responsible for the incredibility of that notion, and the reason why the US parallel is important for British unions, is that unions in America offer nothing but "a silence, a deafening Niagara-type silence" on what is now also a key issue for British employee relations and trade unions: individualism. Increasingly, employee relations in Britain are characterised by individualism, as employers either deal or want to deal with their employees on a one-to-one basis. The crucial question for unions in Britain in the 1990s is whether they can come to terms with this trend, or find themselves beached by it.

Trade unions have, of course, always been a balance between the individual and the collective, seeking to maintain and advance the economic standing of their individual members through collective combination: all for one, one for all. But by most performance measures, that collectivism has not greatly benefited union members in recent years: not only have they, unlike the US, enjoyed very little of a pay lead over non-union employees, but—crucially for the early 1990s—union membership has given them little or no added job protection. Indeed, things have got worse: because of the structure and geography of trade unionism in Britain, union members were three times as likely as employees in general to lose their jobs in this recession.

Since the 1970s, the unions have largely got that balance between the individual and the collective wrong. They now need to rebalance themselves. This is not to say they must neuter themselves, shift themselves into gelded oblivion, but they have to refocus themselves to meet changed markets. Essentially, trade unions operate in two markets—employers and employees. At their best, unions form the link between the two, the hinge between them which helps each to work with the other most efficiently. However much they might oppose employers, traditionally trade unions have been inextricably linked to them: employers have provided their members, very often their finances and their prospects for growth. In return, unions provide a voice for employees that employers have needed to hear.

But what has become clear over the last decade is that demand for trade unionism in both the markets in which unions operate has slumped. In the employee market, union membership has fallen back from its peak at the end of the 1970s of 13.3 million to the point where it is now probably around 8.5 million—with TUC membership a good deal less. Suggestions from some unions and their uncritical supporters that this is a cyclical phenomenon, likely to be reversed when employment and the economy improve, were hit badly when union membership continued to decline in the mid-1980s, even as employment grew: a decline of more than a third in a key product market would be seen as a collapse by any business, and would prompt radical action to stop themselves going under.

Similarly, the unions' other principal market, among employers, has receded sharply. Recognising trade unions for the purposes of collective bargaining is the key index of that market, and it is likely now that collective bargaining may well cover less than 40 per cent of the employed workforce.

What is suggested by the collapse of these markets for trade unionism is a fundamental shift in demand away from the core product unions offer both markets: administrative support for collective bargaining. In the face of the employers' drive for individualism—a drive in many cases welcomed by the new, more flexible employees of the 1990s, for many of whom big monolithic unions are part of their past—unions have to rebalance themselves so they can appeal more closely to this new individualism at work.

Organisations similar to trade unions have managed it, and managed to grow, while unions have been in decline. Some trade unions like to see themselves akin to political parties, or to pressure groups, or even as virtually part themselves of the public sector. They are not: unions are private-sector organisations engaged in providing a range of services for people who wish to buy them. Their closest parallels are not the Labour Party, or bodies like the Low Pay Unit, but other private-sector providers who do a similar job to them—organisations like the AA, or Bupa, who offer people insurance-based motoring and health assistance, just as unions offer employment assistance.

The crucial distinction between such organisations and unions is not one that says union membership at some point involves collective participation, since for most union members, as opposed to union activists, it doesn't. The real distinction is that such parallel organisations are increasingly successful at what they do, and the unions are not.

What successful private-sector operators do is tailor collective provisions more closely to individual demand. On a far larger level than any single trade union in Britain has ever been or is likely to be, the AA manages to service individuals in difficulty at a level and to a standard which is clearly currently impossible for most, if not all, trade unions in Britain. So what can the unions do to improve what they are selling? How can they perform better in the changed, more, individualistic, markets for trade unionism?

Collectivism is actually not in itself a root principle for trade unions, merely an operating technique—deeply embedded, certainly—which, like all such delivery mechanisms needs over time to be performance tested, and the rebalancing of their operations, which greater individualism at work requires, will need considerable reorganisation of the way unions work.

Anton Kazlauciunas

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But two moves are immediate, practical and would go a long way towards individualising the union-member relationship which would have the twin effect of making unions more attractive in both their markets . . .

First, individual financial relationships: John Monks is talking of mounting an extensive campaign to save the collection of union membership subscriptions at source, in the face of the legislative moves against it in the government's latest trade union act. Leaving aside that "Save Check-Off!" is hardly the greatest rallying-cry the unions have yet come up with, this is wholly wrong-headed.

Unions should now abandon the inertia-selling system of check-off, which astoundingly leaves the generation of their income not only outside their control but in the hands of those whom at least nominally they have traditionally opposed—employers—and move instead to direct financial relationships with individual members. Union membership would then be largely freed from the dependence on employer recognition, and would then be portable, staying with an individual employee as he or she moved from job to job, from employer to employer, even into self- or unemployment, regardless of whether an employer was union, non-union, or non-existent.

The second move would be assistance with individual contract bargaining. Good computer database technology now allows unions to respond to employers' individual contract demands with individual employee replies. Most individual employment contracts are mostly like each other rather than anything else, and unions could draw from a range of computer-held clauses on contract issues like health and safety to provide individual employees with a contract to offer in negotiations, rather than the sign-this-or-nothing position often seen now. This would reduce the costs of supporting individual-level bargaining and would stand a good chance of satisfying a clear market need from employees who really do feel on their own now, and for whom many unions currently offer little or nothing.

Just as Labour increasingly feels that if it is ever to be elected again it must break away from its past by blending more successfully the individual and the community, so Britain's unions must take the same steps—accepting that individualism is at the heart of modern trade unionism, and not fundamentally opposed to it. If not, the way ahead for unions looks like more of the same—more decline, powerlessness and irrelevance.

If pro-union Tom Geoghegan is gloomy about unions in America, he's worse about unions in Britain. "The British unions," he writes, "so far as I can tell, have no hope. They hated Thatcher for her effrontery in offering hope. They yearn to be back in the year 1900: they long for 1900 and the common grave." If unions in Britain are to avoid that common grave, then rebalancing their collective and individual roles is crucial to their future in the 1990s and beyond.

Philip Bassett, the industrial editor of the "Times", and Alan Cave, a management consultant with Kinsley Lord, are the authors of "All For One: the Future of Trade Unions" (Fabian Society)

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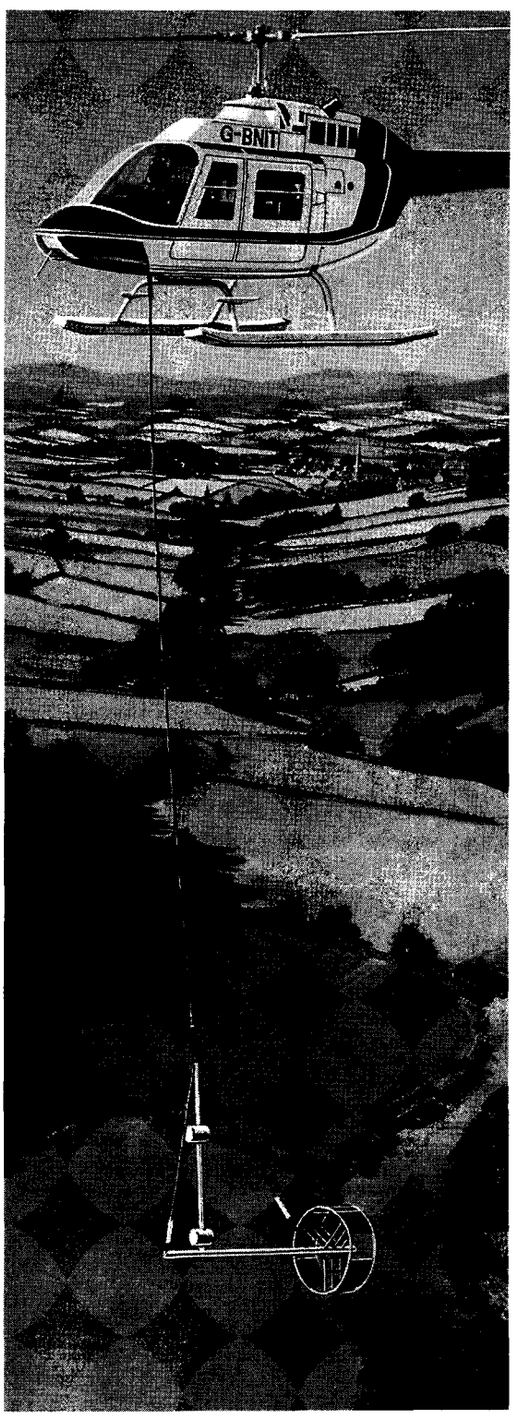
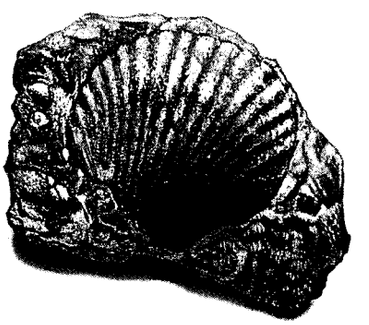
The Sellafield Repository.

Let's go into it together.



Measuring changes in the Earth's magnetic field shows the structure of underground rock formations.

You may have read and heard about the Sellafield Repository Project from different people in the press, on television, at meetings and on the radio. We felt you would like to know more about the thinking behind it; the short and long-term environmental implications and, the whole issue of safe disposal and storage of radioactive waste.



A fossil from 1500 feet which has lain undisturbed for millions of years.

At Sellafield our objective is straightforward. To see if the site is suitable for the safe disposal of intermediate and some low-level radioactive waste. In order to give you the facts, much of what we'll be saying is in answer to questions we've been asked.

WHY BURY THE WASTE?

The alternative to burying radioactive waste is to store it above ground. This means leaving the stores for our great grandchildren and their great grandchildren to maintain. It also leaves them to dispose of the waste properly later on.

Not the sort of task we have the right to leave to anyone else.

If the conditions prove to be right, deep underground disposal equals safety in depth. There, concerns about refurbishing stores and repackaging waste do not exist, ice ages can come and go with little effect.

Over the long term radioactive waste must be even safer half a mile below ground, surrounded by solid rock, than stored on the surface. The radiation dose to work people can be minimised. And time is on our side as all radioactivity fades eventually.

WHY HERE?

The search for a potentially suitable site has been under way for 5 years. We began by asking the experts at the British Geological Survey where to find rock offering the right conditions for burying

Concrete excavated from the foundati of Hadrian's Wall shows how well simil materials can withstand the centuries.

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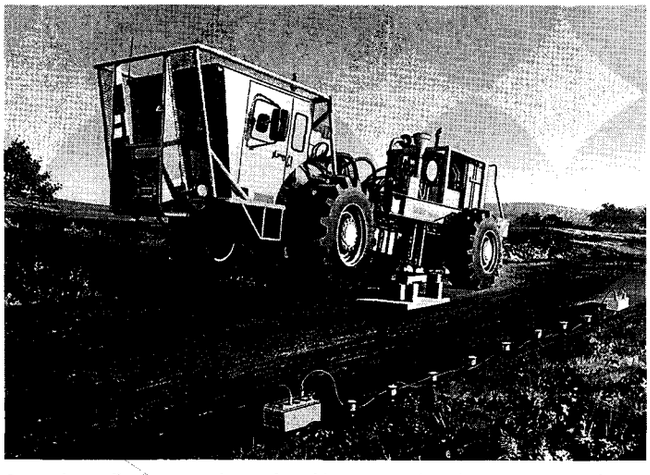
radioactive waste. They pointed to about a third of the UK. Closer investigation followed, taking account of land availability, transport infrastructure, geology and town and country planning considerations.

A CHOICE OF TWO.

Detailed study produced a short-list of potentially suitable sites, of which two were already nuclear sites where local communities have knowledge and understanding of the industry: Dounreay and Sellafield. We decided to drill and evaluate the rock formations, and look more closely at the other factors, at these two sites first. The information we gathered left little to choose between them.

However, one major difference remained. More than half of the intermediate-level radioactive waste is produced at Sellafield so to bury it there would avoid having to transport it through Cumbria to another part of the country.



By mechanically thumping the earth and listening to the echoes we can see where the different rock strata lie.

Safety below ground means safety above ground.

WHY HALF A MILE BELOW GROUND?

One of the most thorough geological surveys ever carried out is under way in the Sellafield area. Initiated by UK Nirex Ltd, the investigations involve dozens of research organisations, including many universities and several overseas specialists.

The subject of much of this work is ground water flow. Initial signs are that in the basement rock beneath the Sellafield area groundwater movement is very slow. We are doing a lot more work to be confident that wastes will stay safely in place even through the next Ice Age, 10,000 years from now.

Over the years ahead, and before we are authorised to dispose of any waste, we will build a detailed understanding of the geological environment in the Sellafield area. In building the repository, we will have to convince the independent watch-dogs every step of the way.

WHY ARE WE TELLING YOU THIS?

We know there are concerns about the Sellafield Repository Project and it is our hope to deal with these by providing facts.

The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre in Lowther Street, Whitehaven has been set up so that you can talk to members of our staff about any aspect of the project.

If you have a specific question right now, do either call in, ring us or write it down in the space provided in the coupon.

Sellafield Repository Project Information Unit is jointly staffed by United Kingdom Nirex Limited and British Nuclear Fuels plc.

If you have a question about any aspect of the Sellafield project, please write it down in the space provided here and send it to: The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre, Cumberland House, Lowther Street, Whitehaven CA28 7AH, or call us free on 0800 243 010.

My question is:

Name

Address

Postcode

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Vicky Hutchings visits one country in eastern Europe that has quietly got on with life after communism without recourse to wars and major ethnic conflict

Hungary to taste a western lifestyle

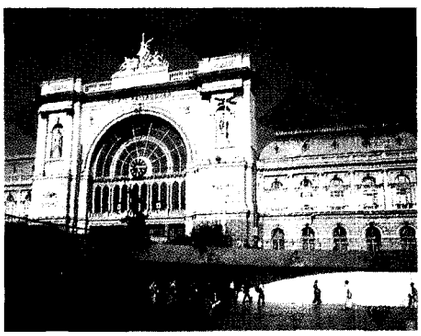
We've all had that game played on us when you ring somewhere and ask if, say, Jill is there. Yes, somebody replies. Then they fall silent, but they're still there, breathing down the line. And you know you'll have to give in and ask them if you can talk to her. But when, on board the Danube hydrofoil from Vienna to Budapest, you ask whether there are places that change money at the other end, and the nice stewardness says yes, you don't think to inquire whether they'll be open. Both cubicles offering forints were shut when we arrived in the early evening.

"Forint seems untouched by monetary storms", was headline news in Hungary when we got there. "ERM turbulence has little effect on Hungary." Maybe next time. When you're at the bottom, a little turbulence might not come amiss. Hungarians, keen on getting your foreign currencies into their country, only allow you to change £5-worth before you enter, so small an amount we hadn't bothered to get any.

Hanging around the docking bay were the usual sort of sharp operators you find the world over, offering taxi rides, places to stay, or even places not to stay. We were approached by a forceful man demanding to know if we needed help. I spoke slowly: "I'm afraid we have no money." He appeared much struck by our difficulty. But, before I had time to explain that what we had was no *Hungarian* money, and would a taxi take sterling, he had turned quickly to the next group leaving the boat.

We were alone in Budapest with two heavy suitcases, our pension was several miles away in the Buda hills, and we hadn't a forint to our names. However, the information office remained open a further five minutes and, one phone call later, a Mr Lajos Puskas turned up in his hotel van after 20 minutes to find us sitting on the kerb.

The hotel had a chic English name: Hotel Queen Mary, and was a symphony of pale grey carpet, white walls and black metalwork. It had a solarium and a sauna in the basement and a pretty little patio outside. The place was full, and clearly doing a roaring trade. Puskas was once, he told us, "a famous footballer" who turned to coaching after 15 years playing for Vasas Budapest. He also played for the "Hungarian representative team", by which I presumed he meant Hungary. In 1989, after coaching for 12 years, he turned his management skills to his piece of land in one of the richest outskirts of Budapest. In 1991, the hotel opened, and all around new buildings are springing up, with gleamingly clean Mercedes and BMWs parked outside, rather than the more common Ladas. Puskas, with all the fervour of the converted, is impatient at what he sees as the slow pace of sorting out "the communist mess".



Above: the Vienna-isation of Budapest, where you can take a trip in a horse-drawn carriage. Below, one of the impressive railway stations

Leonora Casement

After he changed some money for us the next morning, we asked about getting the bus into Budapest. No problem, said Puskas. You take the number 28 from the bus stop down the road to Moszkva tér (Moscow Square), one of the few names with a relationship to the past that have remained unchanged since 1989 (roads and squares called after Engels, Lenin and Marx have now been renamed Erzsébet, Teréz and Nyugati). We really ought to have asked whether you could buy your ticket on the bus. You can't. But you need a ticket to get on, which you have to punch yourself using the little red devices provided. Naturally you can buy them only in Budapest.

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On the principle that once is happenstance, twice is coincidence and three times is a sense of humour, we were thrilled to find ourselves being caught out again. This time we were sent on a long walk to the post office on Saturday afternoon, when we asked the nice lady in the shop where we could buy stamps. We had just bought a number of highbrow postcards showing men playing chess in one of Budapest's spa pools, fitting mementos of this "notoriously intellectual" country, as Berlitz puts it. As one might have predicted, the post office in Hungary shuts after midday on Saturday. How we laughed!

We had got out of Vienna in a hurry. The humidity, the tourists, the high prices, the drilling—as roads and pavements were being replaced by dinky little paving-stones with what appeared to be unnatural enthusiasm outside our bedroom window—and the omnipresent stench of drains had not been quite what the guidebooks promised. But then, coming in August was a pretty stupid idea to start with. So taking the hydrofoil along the yellow-brown Danube through Slovakia to Budapest ensured, at the very least, over six hours of cool breeze. The water is this colour, we were told, because of the "lime content of the riverbed". So no questions about why the lime content has increased so conspicuously since Strauss's time.

The hydrofoil, which leaves twice daily during summer, is run by Mahart Tours, formerly known as The Hungarian Sea & Fluvial Shipping Company. I was particularly interested in going this way as the boat passes through the barrage and reservoir that supplies the Gabcikovo hydro-electric dam in Slovakia. This environmental row on the border between Hungary and Slovakia—one of the two Hungarian stories to have made the western press (the other is Hungarian women living in Slovakia having to add the suffix "ova" to their surnames)—is now in the hands of the World Court. There have been huge demonstrations here, but the day we passed through, sightseers just waved down to us as we slid underneath them. Budapest, as it turned out, was even hotter than Vienna, although the drains appeared to be under better control.

"Vice girls rock Hollywood," said the *Hungarian Times* the week we arrived. But nobody is really interested in the arrest of Heidi Fleiss, alleged purveyor of call girls to the stars. Or even in the hopeful Essex girls who do a bit of escort duty on the path to "discovery". Of much more interest is that *other* operation, run by the former producer of *Starsky and Hutch*, Hungarian-born Ivan Nagy, and his partner Julie Conaster. As a former boyfriend of Fleiss, Nagy has discovered just where a learning curve can get you: like Fleiss, out on bail for a six-figure sum.

Hungary was never quite like anywhere else behind the Iron Curtain, old Hungary hands told me before I went. There was always more *life* about the place. This is, after all, the country that gave the world the LP (Péter Goldmark), the Rubik Cube (Professor Erno Rubik), *The Third Man* (Alexander Korda), the hydrogen bomb (Edward Teller), the best Dracula of all time (Béla Lugosi) and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Still, you have to admit that almost five decades of communist rule cramped the country's style somewhat. These days, you're warned about the gypsy musicians that "lurk" almost everywhere. And given the tumultuous reception they received from a large party of Japanese diners in one excellent little *vendéglo* (def: "restaurant with rustic decor"), in which we found ourselves binging on *bableves* (Hungarian bean soup) and *paprikás ponty* (carp served in paprika sauce), all washed down by Hungarian beer, it will probably get worse.

Yet all Hungarians aren't quite throwing themselves, yet at any rate, into their post-modern tourist future. Through the old Castle District, while builders restore the place to Covent Garden bijou-standard, young scowling women in national costume now slouch outside the new shops that sell expensive knick-knacks to tourists. And who can blame them? I sat outside one cafe and listened to an American woman on a table nearby complain about Hungarian food. At another, two French women sneered at the propensity for older Hungarian ladies to overperm their hair.

Everywhere the shops are selling "antiques", mostly overpriced junk, and the word "restaurant", rather than *étterem*, is becoming more prevalent. Menus even promise a rather horrible-sounding "Menu Business Lunch". Expensive art "gallerias" are springing up, and there are even a handful of *fiakers*, the open horse-drawn carriages that swarm through Vienna, taking tourists round the sights on the Buda side of the Danube.

But no one can deny the excellence of the Hungarian cuisine, or its cheapness. Nor how impressive the city and its great bridges are. Over on the Pest bank, one of the most unsettling sights is the Országház (the houses of parliament). For a moment, it doesn't hit you. Then you realise. As the guidebook so memorably puts it: "The architect, Imre Steindl (1839-1902) may have had the British parliament on his mind."

"Budapest? It's becoming just like Vienna," said an English friend sniffily. Tourism is just *ruining* the place. Up to a point. But then you cross one of the joins into a little bit of the old Hungary, like the Royal Palace, which houses the Hungarian National Gallery and the Ludwig Museum. A few small areas have now had air-conditioning installed. But for the most part, you just have to chase after culture in the old-fashioned way, high-mindedly trying to ignore the sweat pouring down your face.

Take the airport, which we did on the way out. Going up to the first floor, you cross a hall the size of a small stadium, regulation brown lino curling round the edges, plastic chairs uninvitingly placed at random. A short, stout lady in overalls with a scarf round her head pushes a mop back and forth, the bucket slopping by her heels. At one end, once you have put your coins in the slot, a football-style turnstile allows you outside to view the aeroplanes. Through an opening to your left, you time-travel three decades by taking one step. This is the bar lounge: marble, pink mirrors, plants and glass, with little tables under awnings that entice you outside at no extra charge. Perhaps nostalgia is a luxury to be indulged in by those who don't live there. Old brown lino? Give me pink mirrors any day.

The Politics of Conviction

Prisons are too soft a touch,
the customers run smoke rings
round brainless cells.

Our tongues must tut:
lock, lock, lock, lock,
and we must feed them bread
without jam on it,
teach them the real world—
how to be gainfully unemployed,
the value of pointless queues.
Bang up to date.

Here at the Howard League,
we like to think.

We like to think
that none should lie all day
dreaming of dole, parole, or soul.

For a starter: a prisoner's charter.
The right to break boulders,
to be left alone,
tables explaining the width of the bars,
exactly how long you should wait
before crying for help brings assistance.
You won't be left hanging for long.
Let a stretch be performance related.

Too casual. We aim
to stop the slop, the rot,
and the riotous fun.
Like a dog, a prison's for life.
We demand the return of the screw.
Warder, warder everywhere,
as the poet says, I think.

You'll agree with me, I am sure:
we're in need of a brand new regime.

Bill Greenwell

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To voters in Britain's depressed north-east, democracy means that power devolves to 300-mile distant London. **Gareth Smyth** takes the local temperature

Newcastle: browned off with voting

A stone's throw from the Tyne, just outside St Stephen's vicarage, a fairly snot-free six-year-old boy approaches me: "Hey-ee mista, will ya lend us a tab?".

Inside the vicarage, the vicar is ironing. The Reverend George Currie attracted the media spotlight during the 1991 riots by dismissing fashionable explanations of his parishioners' behaviour. Joy-riding and arson, Currie believes, are down to moral failings which are also undermining the political system.

"Our democracy is crumbling because we are destroying the objective moral base," he says. "It's no longer, 'love thy neighbour as thyself', it's 'do your own thing'."

If doing your own thing rules out loving neighbours, it runs against sharing, against community, and against the very idea of politics. Many residents in the west end of Newcastle have lost faith in politicians and in political solutions. Turn-out in the general election averaged just over 20 per cent.

Self-help is the order of the day, and crime can be a way of life. This is where ram-raiding was invented. Rev Currie recalls one parent removing a child from Sunday school when his lessons on the Ten Commandments reached "Thou Shalt not Steal". The clash with the family lifestyle was too strong.

In the city centre office of Bonny's news agency, reporter Mark Davenport phones round the national tabloids with a crime story. A grandmother and former rolypoly-gram has chased away nocturnal car thieves by running out from her house—stark naked. "They took fright at her bodywork", Mark tells a newsdesk in London, proud of his line.

Dry humour is part of Newcastle culture. And even among their tales of unemployment, stealing cars and Friday night punch-ups in the Bigg Market, Geordies are quick to stress they love the city. Many draw the distinction between "decent folk" and, well, the rest. West of St Stephens vicarage in Scotswood, epicentre of the 1991 riots, some houses have immaculate gardens with roses growing up over polished front doors: others have unkempt fronts full of rubbish and broken down cars.

Scotswood grew up around Vickers Armstong. When the engineering works was run down from the 1960s onwards, the community was hit hard. Where once 20,000 people worked, 750 jobs remain. Lower Scotswood has an unemployment rate of 50 per cent. Over 500 families have left in recent years. Houses that are empty—because no-one wants to move here—are rapidly stripped of fittings, even of floorboards. Roof-tiles fetch £75 a hundred. Newcastle city council, without capital available to renovate them, has demolished over 300 houses. Hundreds of council properties remain uninhabited, burnt out and gutted.

The council has brought in traffic calming measures to deter joy-riding. A less orthodox investment is the Scotswood Community Project, a beacon of collective self-help through which local residents run a credit union, a toy library, and training initiatives. Co-ordinator Joe Cafrey, a 47-year-old former plumber born across the Tyne on North Shields' equally notorious Meadowwell Estate, is a council employee who works very closely with locals. Memos flew in council departments when he helped protesting residents barricade a street.

Jacqueline Haq, a mother of five sporting wide glasses, is almost a celebrity. She has been awarded an MBE for her work as chair of the project. Her main concern is the street subculture through which crime gives the status, identity and money once derived from work. Ms Haq is prepared to "understand" the reasons for crime, but has also led mothers in direct action to reclaim the streets from young men.

Residents in western Newcastle have lost faith in politicians and political solutions. Turn-out in the general election averaged just over 20 per cent

Originally a fort on Hadrian's Wall, Newcastle was a medieval base for war against the Scots. Nowadays, resentment is directed southwards. Doug Henderson, the earnest Labour MP for Newcastle North, claims he found rapid acceptance when he moved from Glasgow. "They wouldn't have been like that if I'd come from down south," he says.

Henderson is impressed by the regeneration, the Pas de Calais around the Channel rail link, and argues that regional government in the UK could provide the "motive force for the regional economy". Existing northern outposts of government departments are purely administrative and staffed, Henderson believes, by people anxious to do their time and get back to London. Interest has waned since Edward Heath's government pioneered Newcastle's metro system. An array of quangoes, including the Northern Development Company established in 1986, makes the governing of the north-east an opaque process. If the trail of decision-making leads to a politician, it is towards a minister nearly 300 miles away.

More locally, the city council has its wings clipped. Behind the optimistic, futuristic 1960s facade of the civic centre, council leader Jeremy Beecham feels beleaguered. The council still spends £220 million annually, but 14 of Beecham's 17 years in charge have been under a Conservative government imposing unprecedented controls. "We've tried to keep as much of the show on the road as we can," he says.

Fully half next year's budget cuts will fall in education, inflicting what the committee chairman calls "severe damage" on a service vital for the city's future. Beecham notes an increasing turnover among colleagues, but retains passion for his mission. "Local government is not simply an aggregate of distinct services," he insists. "It's about governance, a forum in which priorities can be debated. It's about the connections between services. That's what's been lost."

As if to compound the frustration, the long years of Conservative rule at Westminster have seen Labour's hold on Newcastle tighten—"the result of the profound alienation of the north from the Tory government," says Beecham. Only 20 years ago the Conservatives controlled the city council, but are now reduced to 6 out of 78 council seats (the Liberal Democrats are the official opposition with 11).

Local Conservatives have lost out from the first-past-the-post system which has given the party such national dominance. With 29 per cent of the vote in Tyne & Wear in the 1992 general election, they won only one of 13 seats: the sole remaining Tory MP, Neville Trotter, clung on in Tynemouth by 597 votes. Piers Merchant, one-time news editor of the *Newcastle Journal*, fled south when he lost Central in 1987 and is now MP for the safe Kent seat of Beckenham.

The Liberal Democrats have pockets of support, but "no-one is attracted to the party just by the promise of power", admits Peter

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Maughan, an affable barrister who came third in Newcastle North last year. Maughan learned to cope with political adversity through his devotion to Newcastle United. As a small child his father took him to see Newcastle beat Anderlecht 3-1 at St James' Park —only to find them knocked out (of the Fairs Cup) on the "away goals" rule. "Grown men were weeping on the top of the bus," he recalls.

The recently deceased T Dan Smith was an old style Labour city boss who became a byword for corruption, but he is remembered warmly in his native Newcastle. Locals point out he spent his final years in a council flat (built in his own heyday). Dan Smith was "one of us": the son of a miner. And "he delivered"—redeveloping the city, and restoring pride.

The closest to a Labour "boss" in the North-east today is Manchester University graduate Nick Brown, MP for Newcastle Central since 1983. Rumour has it he will be Labour's next Chief Whip at Westminster. "If you get on his wrong side, he'll do you over", warns a local reporter, "and there'll be no skiving off early when he's in charge."

Brown is at the centre of an influential political machine built around the GMB. Once a legal advisor to the trade union, he is one of the two Labour MPs in the city, out of four, sponsored by the GMB. The Euro-MP, Alan Donnelly, is also sponsored, and 19 of 78 councillors are members. Across the northern region, GMB-sponsored MPs include Peter Mandelson and Jack Cunningham, whose father Andy Cunningham was a close colleague of T Dan Smith.

The GMB has 110,000 members in the region, an eighth of its entire national strength. The union has branched out from engineering and shipbuilding into local authorities and retailing. It organises the 1,000 strong workforce which makes fruit gums at the Rowntrees plant. Kevan Jones worked for Nick Brown before becoming the GMB's regional political officer. A 29-year-old thinner version of Charles Kennedy, Jones laughs when I suggest his cigar-smoking gives him the air of a traditional union baron. Jones is orthodox on Labour's "one member one vote" (OMOV) debate, unwilling to criticise John Smith directly, but sceptical about handing power over to a party with a small membership.

But fellow GMB member Doug Henderson is as strongly pro-OMOV as he is for regional government. He dismisses Bill Morris' reaction as "another own goal", but agrees Labour needs more members. Henderson's own constituency party has a healthy membership of 600. Around 100 locals recently attended the 30th wedding anniversary of local councillor Danny Marshall in Throckley, one of the ex-pit villages in Newcastle North and where Henderson also lives.

The taxi driver who took me back from Throckley to Newcastle station was a former miner who remembered seeing Jackie Milburn play football in front of 60,000 fans. This season, Newcastle United returned to the top division after an absence of four years. If Geordies expect little of politics and politicians, they have great hopes for Kevin Keegan's team. There will be a powerful communal will behind them.

UN observers in Kashmir, constrained by their own mandate, play badminton, while India ferociously suppresses local separatists. **Andrew Whitehead** reports

Killing time in Kashmir

There's a rather smart building on the outskirts of Srinagar painted United Nations blue. During the summer months, it's the headquarters of the UN's longest-established military observer mission. It's also the UN's smallest observer force, its cheapest, and perhaps its least successful.

In 1949, when the UN first sent military observers, Kashmir was a bruising border dispute between two newly independent nations, India and Pakistan. Since then it has become the gravest potential flashpoint in south Asia, an increasingly brutal battle between Kashmiri secessionists—some of them armed by Pakistan—and Indian security forces, who have shown a cavalier disregard for human rights.

"For some reason the Kashmir dispute does not have a top place in international disputes," laments General Ricardo Galarza, the urbane Uruguayan who heads the UN military observer group. "What are the parameters for the international community? The number of dead? Here in Kashmir, we have scores of dead."

The loudspeakers outside Srinagar's mosques are routinely used to abuse the Indian security forces

General Galarza is shackled by the terms of his UN mandate. He has no role in monitoring the increasingly bloody conflict within Indian-administered Kashmir. And for more than 20 years—since India decreed Kashmir simply a bilateral issue—his field officers have been able to approach the line of control, the line partitioning Kashmir, only from the Pakistan side.

So the UN officers stationed in Srinagar, the capital of Indian-administered Kashmir, high in the Himalayan foothills, have plenty of time for badminton, tea in the beautifully manicured garden, and the occasional beer in the makeshift UN bar. That's a luxury denied to the people of Srinagar. The gun-toting militants have closed down all the cinemas, all the bars, and all the beer stores.

The only hotel still open in what used to be a tourist resort, Adhoo's, has a sign prominently displayed in every room. "Alcohol is not permitted. Guests drinking in their room do so at their own risk". This is political correctness, Kashmir-style.

Kashmiri militancy is increasingly entwined with Kashmir's idiosyncratic style of Islam. At Friday prayers in Srinagar's main mosque, the chief priest leads the thousands of worshippers in chants of "Aazaadi", the freedom cry of the Kashmir valley. No-one thinks it the least amiss when a leader of a local Mujahideen guerilla group then takes the microphone. The loudspeakers stationed outside Srinagar's mosques are routinely used to abuse the security forces and broadcast anti-Indian slogans. Leaders of the Kashmiri militants say the mosques are the only political platform available to them.

Kashmir is the only Indian state in which Muslims are in the majority. It became part of India in 1947 at the whim of its last Hindu ruler, Hari Singh. Pakistan—and many Kashmiris—have been crying foul ever since. An Indian commitment to allow Kashmir self-determination has not been honoured, and the diplomatic dispute between it and Pakistan has taken on a theological complexity.

The political geography of Kashmir is complicated. It consists of three distinct regions: Jammu, where Hindus are in the majority; the sparsely populated Ladakh region, which is mainly Buddhist; and the strikingly beautiful Kashmir valley, an overwhelmingly Muslim area, and the stronghold of the militants.

The new phase of Kashmiri militancy began late in 1989. It was the direct result of Delhi's insensitivity to Kashmir, its marginalising of local leaders, and elections in 1987, widely believed to have been rigged. Armed groups became active. The Indian authorities tried to put them down with the same brutality they used against Sikh separatists in nearby Punjab. It hasn't worked.

In Punjab, most Sikhs had no great sympathy for a separate homeland, and became increasingly hostile to separatist groups which resorted to extortion and routine terror. The militants in Kashmir also extort money. But most Kashmiri Muslims yearn for self-determination, and here the iron fist of the Indian security forces has only hardened political attitudes.

The security clampdown in Srinagar is ferocious. Thousands of soldiers and paramilitary troops—hardly any of them Kashmiri speakers—line the streets. Sandbagged bunkers, sheathed in anti-grenade netting, have been constructed at street corners. In the

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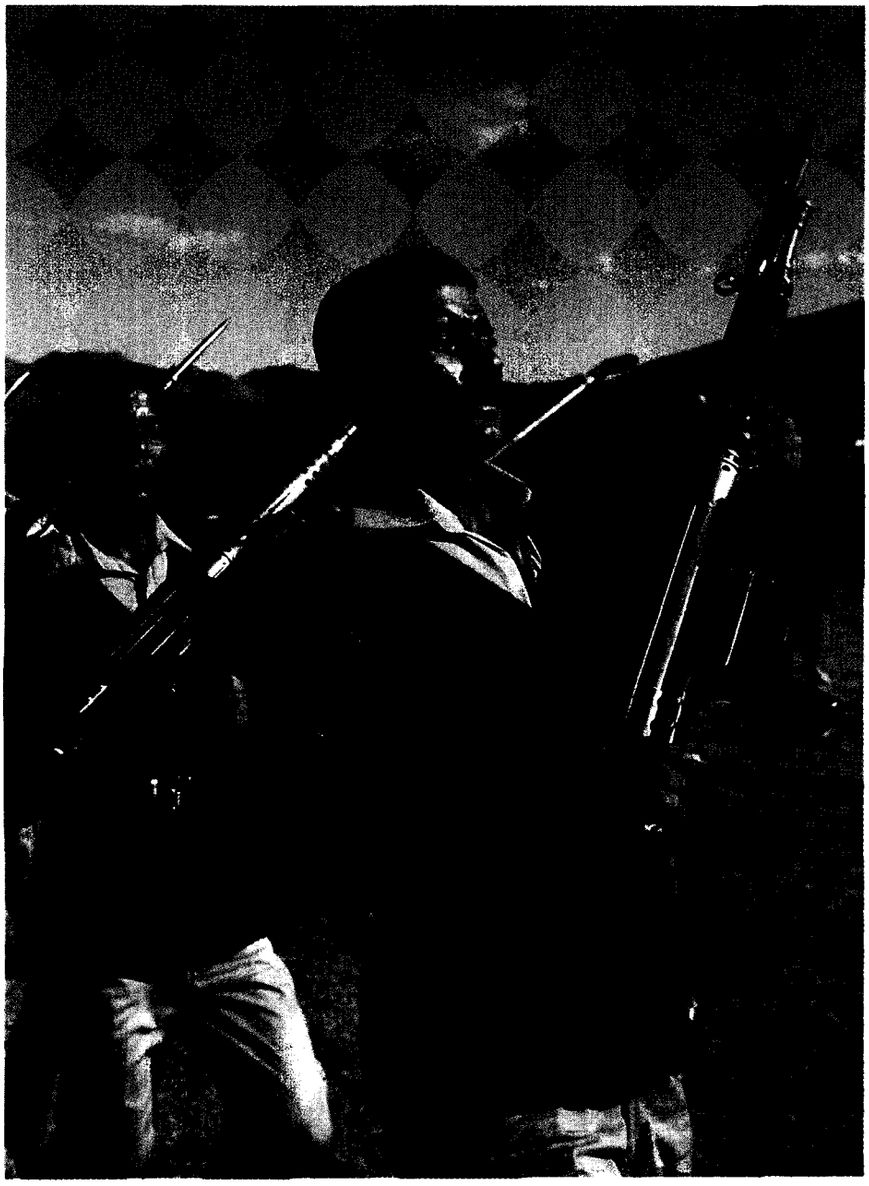

Pakistanis training one of the separatist Kashmiri guerilla armies

words of one foreign diplomat, it has the feel of a city under occupation. If Srinagar closes down after dark, it's not simply because there are no beer stores or cinemas. No Kashmiri with common sense would venture out amid all those Indian army patrols.

The Indian authorities have, of late, tried to make some amends. A new state governor has been appointed. India's minister for internal security, Rajesh Pilot, has made clear to the security forces that there must be no more deaths in custody. Allegations of improper conduct by soldiers are being taken more seriously. There have been attempts to establish more jobs for young Kashmiris (though the local economy has survived the increasing violence remarkably well). And other steps have been taken towards normalisation—such as reopening the local radio and television stations.

The stated aim is to win the hearts and minds of Kashmir's Muslims. So far, it's failed.

"We don't want India here. They've killed too many, they've plundered too much, raped too many"

"This is a war here, OK," says Yasmin Noqshbandi, a lecturer in Srinagar and not, she insists, a member of any militant group. "The dissatisfaction with India runs very, very deep. Everyone, from the top brass to the local plumber and mason, is with this. The one or two per cent in Kashmir supporting Indian rule have been lost forever. Right now, we don't want India here. They've killed too many, they've plundered too much, raped too many. Kashmiris have no future with India."

Any foreign journalist walking around Srinagar is liable to be mobbed by Kashmiris complaining of alleged Indian army atrocities.

"Indian dogs!" an elderly Kashmiri shouted repeatedly in my ear. An old woman broke down as she recounted how her son, a TV mechanic, had been picked up by the security forces on his way to work. She feared he had been tortured, and had no idea where he was being held. A houseboat owner showed me round his property, which had been searched by security forces the previous night. Doors and windows had been broken down, and his wife's gold bangles stolen.

Indian troops know they have no friends in the Kashmir valley. They are subject to guerilla-style attack—hand grenades thrown at patrols, attacks on army posts, and sniper fire. If they return fire, civilians are the most likely casualties, and passions are yet further inflamed.

The main goal of the Indian security forces is to stop armed militants infiltrating into Indian-administered Kashmir from the Pakistan controlled area. There's considerable evidence that Pakistan arms and trains those Kashmiri groups who want union with Pakistan. And some veterans of the Afghan conflict have also moved to Kashmir, in search of a new jihad.

The oldest and probably best supported of the Kashmiri guerilla groups, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, gets no help from Islamabad. The JKLF wants an independent Kashmir. Once that might have seemed impossibly unrealistic, but the proliferation of small states in former Soviet central Asia makes the JKLF's aspiration seem at least feasible.

The JKLF, though, is in a difficult position. Deprived of material support from Pakistan, it is falling behind in firepower. Yet in the absence of conventional political parties in Kashmir, the JKLF is also the organisation most likely to be courted by Delhi for some sort of settlement.

So does it continue under arms and risk being outgunned, or edge towards a compromise and so risk being seen as collaborating?

India, however, shows no great urgency in searching for a political solution. "We cannot change the borders of a nation just because of a few reckless elements," says P C Dogra, head of the paramilitary Border Security Force in Kashmir. "Kashmir is part of India, and will stay part of India. Forever".

That's a fair reflection of Delhi's thinking. If India conceded Kashmiris' demands for self-determination, it would encourage dozens of other secessionist groups—particularly in the north-east—to step up guerilla action.

If the minority Congress government made any concession on Kashmir, it would give a ready-made election issue to the main opposition party, the Hindu nationalist BJP. And given the enduring hostility between India and Pakistan—Islamabad's high commissioner in Delhi said recently that relations were as bad as they had ever been—no Indian government could possibly consider doing anything that might give comfort to its regional rival.

So Kashmir—with a beauty that defies conventional clichés, and a climate all India envies—is likely to continue to suffer a calamitous casualty rate.

Andrew Whitehead is the BBC World Service correspondent in Delhi

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Hard shell of the Home Office

The death of Joy Gardner in the custody of police and immigration officers occurred in such shocking circumstances that the cries of outrage were not limited to the usual liberal circles. But immigration and asylum scandals come around and go around. The great rumbles of protest soon subside, so long as public order is maintained and mainstream politicians decline to get involved.

Joy Gardner died while most members of parliament were on holiday. It was as well that Bernie Grant and the local MP Barbara Roche were in Britain for the summer. The Anti-Racist Alliance and other such groups have a crucial role to play in mobilising public outrage. For justice to be done, however, there has to be a ladder leading from them to politicians, the police and Home Office.

One highly public and tragic case, such as Joy Gardner's, soon brings other injustices to light. The Asian newspaper *Eastern Eye* recently carried a report of the alleged treatment of Rukshana Faqir, a 23 year old, who was staying with her cousin in Walsall. She claims that she was dragged by her hair from her bed and down the stairs, before collapsing unconscious. Her cousin, Ellen, says the officers thought she was putting on an act. "They all do that," one of them allegedly told her as Rukshana lay at their feet. Eventually, after Ellen pleaded with them, they called an ambulance and she was taken to hospital.

Three plain clothes men and a woman interpreter were present at the raid. The woman spoke Bengali, while Rukshana spoke only Urdu. Rukshana is now being detained in a West Midlands prison, with her case on hold following protests by her solicitor. The Police Complaints Authority and the Home Office have promised to investigate her treatment.

The radical black group the National Black Caucus has also turned up a dramatic case of its own. It is currently hiding a 49-year-old Ghanaian, Justice Anim, and his wife and three children, after all the legal means of keeping them in Britain have been exhausted. Unlike Rukshana Faqir, the Anims are not claiming to have been physically mistreated, but they do insist that they have been unfairly penalised as "overstayers".

Anim and his family fell foul of the immigration laws after he failed to renew his visa at the required time. It appears that a reminder notice was sent to Anim's old address, but that the Post Office failed to carry out his instructions to redirect his mail. Until then, Anim had scrupulously fulfilled all the terms and conditions of his residency in Britain. His four-year-old child, Derek, has a serious eye complaint and his consultant at Guy's Hospital, Reginald Daniel, has urged the Home Office to allow him to stay.

The National Black Caucus' tactics in the Anim case have been the source of great controversy. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, for example, is against hiding people from the immigration authorities. Whatever the circumstances of the Anim family, it feels that such a drastic measure is bound to fail in the long run. The NBC has appealed for more safe houses to be set up, but there will never be enough to offer protection to everyone. The JCWI suspects that this course of action will only encourage the Home Office to use more strong-arm tactics, at the very moment that it is on the defensive over the death of Joy Gardner.

Campaigners for Joy Gardner are hopeful that sufficient pressure has built up on the Police Complaints Authority for it to produce a thorough-going and wide-reaching report. It is due to report at the end of September and the signs are that it will be pushing to the limits of its brief. But it cannot examine conduct of the immigration service as a whole, which is why the Joy Gardner campaign is still pressing for a public inquiry. Nor does the PCA have to make its findings public, although it is expected to make a report to the Home Secretary, which will have to be made available to parliament.

The government has entwined immigration and asylum until the public finds them almost indistinguishable

The shadow home secretary, Tony Blair, has just returned from holiday. At the beginning of last week, he penned an unusually cordial letter to Bernie Grant. "The success you have had in making sure that the issues raised by the case have had a high profile is admirable," he wrote. "It is important that we continue to emphasise that a number of seemingly similar cases have come to light."

All the same, Blair was probably not too sorry to be abroad when the scandal broke. Many individual Labour MPs have a fine record of representing their constituents in battles with the Home Office, so much so that the government has stripped them of many of their rights to intervene in recent years. Behind the scenes, much work was also done by Labour frontbenchers such as Graham Allen to dilute the impact of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act. But, with Basildon man on its mind, Labour prefers to let its backbenchers make the running.

The JCWI's director, Claude Moraes, points out that the Tories play exactly the same game, from the opposite end of the spectrum. The likes of Winston Churchill make inflammatory speeches, while the government either tut-tuts or maintains a dignified silence. That way, a delicate truce is upheld between the two parties on immigration matters, while their respective liberal or reactionary credentials are nevertheless maintained.

In recent years, the government has sought to entwine asylum and immigration cases to such an extent that they have become virtually indistinguishable in the public mind. First the Tamils, then the Kurds and the Zaireans were treated as economic migrants who were trying to beat the system. The Bosnians are now paying the price for the British government's determination to clamp down on asylum seekers lest more "waves" of black people try to enter the country.

This is of a piece with the government's attempt to strike a tough posture within the European Community. For the most part, the government's attention is directed towards preventing illegal immigrants from letting their feet touch the ground in Britain. But, in the case of "overstayers" who are already in Britain, like Joy Gardner, the policy is one of brutal detention and removal.

Bit by bit, ever more disturbing information is coming to light. The Home Office minister Charles Wardle has admitted that it was no accident that Gardner's solicitor was informed that her appeal had been refused only several hours after the early morning knock on her door. Such a practice is routine, he admitted to Barbara Roche.

It has also emerged that a private security firm, Airline Security Consultants, was employed by the Home Office to deport Dorothy Nwokedi, a Nigerian woman who claims she was bound and gagged on leaving Britain. There is concern that airline carriers may themselves be insisting on restraining deportees so that their fare-paying passengers are not disturbed.

It will take more than a Police Complaints Authority investigation to draw together these threads. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Paul Condon, has taken an interest in the Gardner case; and so has Tony Blair. But the Home Office shell is hard to penetrate. It will remain intact unless Labour reacts not just to individual tragedies, but to the whole culture and practice of the immigration authorities.

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SIDELINERS

After the recent re-evaluating of Haringey's cuddly black MP, Bernie Grant, we clearly need some new word like "debogeying". This could indicate how the press, years after realising Bernie Grant MP was not the murderous black Trotskyist depicted by Tory tabloids in the 1987 election, suddenly rediscovers he is almost an "Uncle Tom", quite useful for keeping local protests in legitimate channels.

Sometimes a politician has to die to be fully debogeyed, as in Aneurin Bevan's case. Now widely revered as the NHS's founder, even the Manchester Guardian treated him like a communist at the time of his 1951 rebellion against Harold Wilson. His "sin" was to refuse to capitulate to American pressures to expand the Korean war into a war with China, and to speed the rearmament of the UK, which threatened the NHS and the whole economy. Curiously, it was Winston Churchill who began the process of debogeying "Nye" in a 1952 speech endorsing his analysis.

We also need words to distinguish between genuine turncoats and those whose idealistic black-and-white views take on the greys of reality as their perception matures. The classic clash, of course, was when Bevan's unilateralist acolyte, Michael Foot, turned on his master in Brighton in October 1957, for not wishing to go "naked into the conference chamber". Recently, Andrew Marr of the Independent indicated his loathing for Paul Johnson, who flipped from neurotic leftism, as editor of the New Statesman, to over-the-top Thatcherism as a Daily Mail columnist.

We need other words to distinguish between genuine ideological conversions and those tinged by varying degrees of opportunism. As a young student at Columbia University, I was fascinated by the flip-flop of one Dr Karl Wittfogel, a former pillar of the German Communist Party who became an avid anti-communist after he found that communists could not secure research funds from the Rockefeller Foundation.

A recent fascination has been with the career of Brent South's MP, Paul Boateng. Connections in Hemel Hempstead, enabled me to observe, in July 1982, Paul Boateng's ousting as candidate of its former Labour MP, Robin Corbett, aided by an unscrupulous hard-left caucus. Two months later, at a meeting of the Trotskyist periodical Labour Herald, I heard his powerful oration, centred about the "witch-hunt" against his candidacy. Asking a perceptive colleague how Boateng could run both with the Trotskyist hounds and the Methodist hares, he reassured me: "Don't worry about Boateng. He's only exploiting the Trots to find a winnable seat. Once in, he'll be as moderate as hell!" I recalled this prediction two years ago when, as Labour's City spokesman, he tried to defend Lloyd's names' against bankruptcy. His punishment was to be replaced as "too moderate" by Tony Banks on the BBC's Behind the Headlines. A few Labour frontbenchers may soon be punished at conference and in the Commons for similar turncoatism.

Andrew Roth

EDWARD PEARCE

The new paralysed, idea-fearful, frightened Labour Party is incapable of the leap of energy the public cries out for

If I referred last week to politics generally being in a state of inanition, how would we describe the Labour Party? Gordon Brown has promised not to raise taxes. He has assured people with money that Labour is not their enemy. Effectively, what they took under Thatcher is underwritten by the Labour Party. Frank Field, writing in the *Guardian*, gently and unpolemically reminds us that the gains of the top 1 per cent through tax cuts since 1979 exceed the original *income* of anyone in the bottom 95 per cent. That is a state of affairs that Labour's spokesman on the Treasury undertakes to maintain.

It is a weird reflection on the state of the Labour Party that Field, who makes this point before arguing for modest tax increases directed at employment-creation, has been under assault in his Birkenhead constituency for most of the past decade by people wanting "a real socialist", whatever that is. Yet the Brown flight from purpose has barely created a ripple. The absence of argument is frightening, even in August. It suggests that Labour has given up on ideas as being too rich for its convalescent stomach, but also that it has lurched from furious and destructive civil war to limp acquiescence in anything. If there is one thing Labour actually needs now, three years from an election, it is a good old-fashioned argument about principle.

If there is one thing Labour actually needs now, it is a good old-fashioned argument about principle

The far left exists provincially, fighting verminous little wars of vengeful particularism, while the new realists atop the national party have lost sight of the unemployed, the child-poor and the losing side, except as rhetorical punchballs. The idea of social expenditure coming out of growth was sensible enough when direct taxes stood where they did in 1960. After a massive transfer of money into the hands of the upper percentiles of the Thatcher time, a refusal to tax is a refusal to have a social purpose, indeed, a refusal of all purpose. What exactly does Labour offer a nation of bankrupt high streets beyond affordable training schemes?

Mr Brown, a great admirer of the "dynamic" Australian Labour government of Hawke and Keating, is cited as someone who looks good on television, who photographs well, the go-ahead, market-aware package. Politicians have been whoring after the Kennedy look for a long time now; surely there are better, less trivial things to do. If handsome style and PR man's package conceal loss of preoccupation with the unemployed, conceal submission to Margaret Thatcher's successful waging of class war on behalf of the well-to-do, then that package is not nothing, it is worse than nothing. It is the end of the Labour Party as the repository of moral purpose.

Ironically, the Great Brown Retreat is not even smart politics. As Frank Field (again) says, people's resistance to tax is to unpurposed tax—John Smith promising to raise money for good but insufficiently specific ends—and also to vaguely described tax that can be exaggerated by Conservative propaganda.

When it comes to bogey-making, the Tories are Manchester United, Aston Villa and Glasgow Rangers rolled into one.

But meet them with specifics—this penny on tax to be spent on that element of job creation—and you are talking business, even, perhaps especially, in the south and Midlands where unemployment has hit hardest and against all tradition. Brown so sadly timid, is not the man to offend against the civil service orthodoxy that abhors hypothecated revenue. But that, frankly, is part of the Treasury's mystical and undemocratic instinct.

Tell people in Stevenage, Great Yarmouth and Dudley West, three difficult marginals, that you will tax indeed, but earmark the increase for this well thought-out, job-making purpose, and you need not fear the voters. Why indeed have southern voters so abandoned the Conservatives lately, despite their low taxes?

But the new, paralysed, idea-fearful, frightened Labour Party, caught arthritically in the middle of a pre-emptive cringe, the do-nothing, flowers and chocolates Labour Party, is incapable of the leap of energy, imagination and empathy cried out for by a public waiting on resurrection. Starting from its own fears, it cannot, like Roosevelt, warn people against fear. Labour exists, but huddled into inertia behind the promotional props, what exactly is it for?

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NSS's annual survey of trade union leaders (see Shoreditch, page 7) has always set the fur flying. Poor old Norman Willis, the outgoing TUC general secretary for whom the survey turned into a once-yearly slap in the face from fraternal friends, tended to adopt a philosophic air (though press coverage of his low ratings last year prompted the rueful remark, "Anyone who says that all publicity is good publicity has never had bad publicity"). Some of his colleagues, though, regard the survey—which we've never intended to be taken too seriously—as a rather scurrilous exercise. One union general secretary, for instance, returns his survey form each year in the post-paid envelope provided—carefully torn into tiny little pieces. Others, such as Tony Young of the National Communications Union, complain that they do not approve of "anonymous and somewhat invidious appraisement procedures". (On the other hand, it should be noted, there are signs that an increasing number of gensecs are getting into the proper spirit of things. This year, the leader of one of our biggest unions gave scrupulously fair ratings to each of his colleagues before awarding himself a, shall we say, overgenerous ten out of ten. "What a wonderful guy!" he wrote alongside his name in the margin.)

The 1993 survey tapped a new seam of criticism too. As Elizabeth Symons, general secretary of the Association of First Division Civil Servants, writes: "Is there any particular reason why you insist on never including any women in your survey? I know we do not count for very much . . . but surely we count a little bit . . . don't we?"

The TGWU national organiser and TUC women's committee chair, Margaret Prosser, writes a tougher letter: "You concoct a list of men, representative of unions big and some so small that their total membership is less than the numbers of women that some senior women union leaders are responsible for and expect us women to take this as a survey 'representative of the leaders in the trade union movement'. If your aim is to name only general secretaries, you could have also included Liz Symons of the First Division Association or Helen McGrath of the Knitwear, Footwear and Apparel Trades. If, however, you see 'leader' in a wider sense, then there are currently 15 women members of the TUC general council, plus many other senior women doing excellent work 'leading' in their unions."

Prosser goes on: "I am sure my sister colleagues in the movement would agree that the nature of the survey is, in any case, not a very nice affair. Anonymous comments and scores do not do much to engender solidarity and do not even meet the assumed objective of giving us a good laugh. Why don't you consider a more sophisticated piece of summer fun?"

Objections to the absence of women union leaders on our survey list have even resulted in NSS being nominated for the 1993 Swomp award. Swomp —Socialist Women on Male Platforms—has designed this award "to draw attention to organisations such as yours who publicly demonstrate their commitment to women's equality through their recognition of the importance to our movement of ensuring women maintain their traditional place in society —unseen and unheard."

Alas, we must turn down our nomination. Trade union members (and their wives) will no doubt be relieved to learn that, in this instance at least, NSS is not guilty of sexism; the fault lies with the unions themselves. Our survey asks for ratings of union general secretaries. There are around 70 TUC-affiliated unions. We can't list them all, so we restrict the survey to the biggest—those with memberships in excess of 100,000. (A solitary exception was made this year of Arthur Scargill and the NUM, which qualifies as a special case due to what has happened to the coal industry over the past 12 months.) None of these unions has a woman general secretary; hence no woman appears in our survey.

Steve Platt

Learning together

Congratulations on your editorial on religion and education ("Religion and education", 27 August). Many people, including Labour MPs, are concerned at the apparent injustice in refusing state funding to Muslim schools. They see it as a further example of the government's covert racism. The arguments in your editorial show that this view is short-sighted. We all need to look deeper; to examine the structure on which this dilemma rests. This is, of course, the entire concept of tax-payers' money being used to fund religious schools.

Surely we want to bring up our children to be world citizens, able to learn from each other so that they can understand differences of view. The ugly results of segregation are, unhappily, widely evident. Young people should be *learning together*—the title of a leaflet we publish which makes the case for schools that *integrate*—not separate.

John White
Secretary
Education Committee
British Humanist Association
London WC1

Educational aims

Your editorial ("Religion and education", 27 August) raised most of the relevant points and was right to highlight the privileges accorded to Anglicanism by the state. Historically, the other denominations were quick to demand similar funding for their schools, and heaven knows how many further requests will follow.

One point you neglected concerns those children who have only a church school in their neighbourhoods, as happens in west Berkshire. Paradoxically, the local education authorities are forced to pay out large amounts on transport to send children to denominational schools of their parents' choice. Time after time, Labour constituencies have voted in favour of complete secular education, and the Socialist Education Association has a long history of bringing forward reasonable ideas for the phasing out of religious schools. But all to no avail.

Labour's party conference is rarely allowed to address the subject for fear of upsetting what your editorial calls the "Catholic heartlands". The party has not discussed the issues openly. The present policy was virtually devised by those MPs in "key marginal seats", and sounds seductive. However, your analysis is correct to indicate that it is not the state's business to be involved in promoting religious or non-religious beliefs. Education is about *questioning* ideologies.

Debates are needed within both the Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties to decide a policy, and in order for the general public to be aware of all the arguments. There would naturally be storms of protest by the religious groups for daring to suggest change, and threats of action by European courts in support of parents' rights. Hopefully, others would support children's rights and the true aims of education.

If a fully comprehensive system is ever to be put in place, the religious question must be settled once and for all.

Bob Tutton
Purley
Reading

Scotch myths

Sarah Baxter (Political Column, 27 August) uses a style familiar to "we in Scotland" from political columnists; in other words, playing up the idea that Labour is in terminal decline while exaggerating the achievements of the SNP and Scottish Militant Labour (SML).

Rather than continually losing ground in local by-elections (an impression that may have been gained from Ms Baxter's column), Labour hasn't actually been performing all that badly in Scottish local by-elections, and has actually, on occasion, gained seats. While it is true that there have been a few well-publicised disasters, the Labour vote has, in general, held up well.

This picture is different from that often portrayed by Sarah Baxter and other political columnists, who concentrate on the myth rather than the reality. This comes to the fore in particular with the claim that SML has won several wards this year in Glasgow and Dundee; the reality is that Militant gained a few wards last year in Glasgow, with none having been gained at any time in Dundee.

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While I do not expect total subservience to the Labour Party, I would at least expect *NSS* to check its facts.

Iain Archibald
Falkirk

Mistaken wobble

It was a tremendous reward for all of us who worked on the "Positive Lives" exhibition to read Marina Benjamin's intelligent review ("A human condition", 20 August) that sensitively explored the social context of the HIV epidemic. When moved to shout about an issue that you believe has been so misrepresented, it is very gratifying to know that the cry has been heard and understood.

However, in negotiating this precarious territory, the smallest wobble can produce exaggerated consequences, and it is unfortunate that the review incorrectly identified Winston (the effervescent gay night-clubber) as being HIV-positive. As a very public figure in London's social whirl, Winston made a strong commitment by agreeing to be photographed for this exhibition: "Everyone should be concerned about this issue, and I want to use my position to make a statement about Aids. Now with HIV around, there are so many people dying of Aids: they are friends of mine, friends of yours and friends of someone who has passed away because of it. But there is still so much life to celebrate."

But he does not have an HIV diagnosis himself, and wishes his friends, his doctor and his insurance compay to know that any suggestion to the contrary is unfounded. It is a stark illustration to the points raised by Marina Benjamin in her review that an assumed diagnosis of a medical condition requires a public letter to restore balance to Winston's life. "Positive Lives—responses to HIV" continues at the Photographers' Gallery, London, until 18 September, before moving to the National Museum of Photography at Bradford from 23 November.

Stephen Mayes
Exhibition co-director
Network Photographers
London EC1

NSS apologises to Winston for the error. We deeply regret any distress it may have caused

THIS ENGLAND

£5 for all entries printed below. Entries on a POSTCARD please

• Education staff at Full Sutton prison near Pocklington have organised an archaeological day school next week in conjunction with the Archaeological Resource Centre in York.

Valerie Forster, education officer at Full Sutton, said staff from ARC had visited the prison to discuss possible combined activities and found a great deal of enthusiasm among inmates . . . who show[ed] an interest in digging.— *Yorkshire Evening Press* (Mrs M Toy)

• In a statement to police Dynes said: "I took off my glasses and said: 'I'm a Christian. Do you know Jesus loves you?'

"The man said: 'I think I'm a Christian too' and punched me."—*Gloucester Citizen* (Norman Ford)

Insidious censorship

It is ironic that John Pilger's article on the censorship of reports on Northern Ireland should be called "The silence of the lambs" (*NSS*, 20 August), because one programme I think it is time he saw is called *Where sheep may safely graze*. It was made by RTE (Irish national television), and shows how Ireland became a Catholic state with Catholic morality enshrined in legislation. Knowledge of that history should be obligatory for any reporter writing about Northern Ireland.

The sad fact that Pilger does not want to face is that religious differences are central to the Irish problem, and not just a media distraction as he claims. W B Yeats, the poet and senator, warned the Irish Dáil in 1924 that their Catholic legislation would alienate Protestants and make unity impossible. He was ignored. The south made no attempt to separate church and state, and so it became a state that the Protestants of the north would only join under duress. The IRA—Ireland's National Front—has been creating that duress since the 1930s, with its death squads and car bombs.

However, I do not mean to imply that the north is totally blameless. Undoubtedly, there was discrimination against Catholics; there still is religious apartheid in the education system; the Orange parades are tribal and provocative.

So the truth about Northern Ireland involves a whole range of factors, and there is work to be done on both sides of the border to create pluralistic, democratic societies. One thing is clear, though; the colonialism-and-repression story that John Pilger advocates is little more than propaganda.

Radicals who stick to that simple story, despite all the evidence of more complex factors, are guilty of an insidious form of censorship themselves.

Les Reid
Co Antrim
Northern Ireland

A mole too far

Ray Hill (Letters, 27 August) illustrates *Searchlight*'s usual inaccuracy. I never wrote that Hill was *convicted* for fraud, rather that, to avoid trial in South Africa, "two days before the hearing he left the country on a duplicate passport, forfeiting £1,500 bail which had been put up by his wife in cash" (*Guardian*, 18 April 1979). As for arson, no edition of the pamphlet I have distributed refers to any such thing.

As for *Searchlight*'s links with the secret state, to take just two instances, there are the self-admissions in the 1977 Gable memorandum (reproduced in *Lobster* 24), and also the *Jewish Chronicle* (23 October 1987), which spoke of "stories gleaned from a wide range of contacts including people in the secret services". As for "exposing" MI6 links to fascists, given that MI5 hate MI6 that is no surprise, although the outrageous assertion that *Searchlight* broke the "Gladio" story will come as news indeed to those who did.

The persistent connection of me with Patrick Harrington and Steven Brady is based on nothing other than that I have, in the interests of research for my Phd and book, interviewed and corresponded with them and many others. Some of the resulting research has been published in, for example, *Tribune* and *Lobster*. *Lobster* 24 contains my analysis of the past views and Ulster Defence Association links of Steve Brady, as Hill knows. As for Harrington, in a future *Lobster* he too will be analysed. The Press Complaints Commission did *not* say I was Harrington's "errand boy", rather they (despicably) refused even to examine the evidence for or against that assertion, and in dismissing my case without doing so thereby enable *Searchlight* to pretend that my "errand boy" status is proven. Hill is very free with threats to sue; I suggest he does so.

My pamphlet's full title is *A Lie Too Far—Searchlight, Hepple and the left*. It is nothing to do with Harrington and Brady; rather it concerns the attempts by Tim Hepple, the *Searchlight* and self-confessed MI5 asset, to infiltrate—aided by Ray Hill—anarchist circles, and set them up for attack by fascists, the state,

Min Cooper

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and anti-fascists, by means of passing to them fake lists of Combat 18 members. The passing of lists was admitted by Gable in the Hepple book *At War with Society*—though he denied it was anything to do with *Searchlight*. The contention of my pamphlet is that Tim Hepple/*Searchlight*'s role in this affair was at the behest of MI5.

Larry O'Hara
London WC1

This correspondence is now closed

Misleading machismo

Last week's article on recent events in Nicaragua ("Machismo in Nicaragua", 27 August) obscured more than it revealed with its headline and the stress on Nicaragua's history of armed conflict and tussles between the FSLN and the National Opposition Union (UNO). Ralf Leonhard's reference to links between politicians and rebel groups is equally misleading. While such links undoubtedly exist, it would be a mistake to see present conflicts as a war of position between two politically cohesive and homogenous blocs.

The real source of tension in present-day Nicaragua is the terrible economic situation, aggravated by the policies of the Chamorro government and continued pressure from right-wing forces in the US. This has led to misery and widespread unrest among the majority of the population. The attempt to resolve political conflicts by an informal pact between the Chamorro government and the FSLN leadership, while continuing current economic policy, may have made a bad situation worse.

It has left the large sectors broadly supporting the FSLN without clear leadership on the issues that most concern them, encouraging the tendency for small groups to resort to arms. At the same time, it has created a space for demagogy by the right-wing UNO coalition. Recent battles in Estelí between two groups broadly supporting the FSLN indicate the seriousness of the position. This situation has recently led a group of leading figures in the FSLN to call for a special congress of the FSLN and a clear break with the government over economic and social policy. Attempts to analyse Nicaragua or other countries in central America in narrowly political terms, rather than via a grasp of the economic and social problems facing the majority, are not only mistaken, but encourage reactionary stereotypes of the kind expressed in the headline.

Steve Munby
Liverpool

India's bitter harvest

The December 1992 riots in Bombay are not "the worst communal killings" in India since partition in 1947 ("Storm clouds gather over New Delhi", 20 August). Praful Bidwai surprisingly fails to mention the 1984 riots following Indira Gandhi's assassination, and the qualitative change that followed in the nature of political violence in the country. The ruling party, the police, and—most important—the judiciary, colluded to protect the guilty, and India is today reaping the bitter harvest of those kilings.

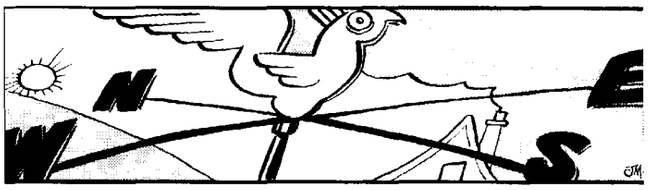
In about 72 hours, around 3,000 Sikhs were brutally murdered, mostly by being burnt alive, by mobs led by Congress Party leaders, and incited by live TV broadcasts of crowds chanting "we demand blood for blood". Middle-class Indians openly asserted that "the Sikhs need to be taught a lesson". Subsequent judicial enquiries became farcical as Congress tried to shield the guilty.

Since 1984, communal killings have become more numerous, more horrific, and increasingly accepted by the large middle class as a legitimate solution to the complex problems facing the country, and secularism is increasingly treated with disdain. Ayodhya and the subsequent riots are the natural result of years of systematic criminalisation of politics.

How many *NSS* readers are aware that, in hundreds of riots in India since independence, no one has even been convicted? The blame for this rests squarely on the shoulders of Congress leaders. In 1984, Rajiv Gandhi justified the riots by insisting that "when a big tree falls, the earth shakes". It was the tree of secularism and justice that fell, and the tremors are still being felt.

Dr Swaran P Singh
Nottingham

FRINGE BENEFITS



Colin Ward watches an emergency teacher become a Grand Old Man

Maybe it's unwise to say so in view of the government's determination to reduce the training and status of teachers, but part of the folklore of the schooling industry is that the best generation of educators we ever had was the one produced by the postwar one-year emergency training programme. They shook up a world where there had been no school-building for six years, where the old senior classes of elementary schools were, at a stroke of the pen, renamed secondary modern, while the minimum leaving age was raised from 14 to 15.

Why did they become so admired? Some say it was because their lives had not been confined to school: they had knocked about a bit. I think it was because, in those hopeful days, teaching was an *admired* occupation. Teachers weren't scapegoats for society's failings.

That generation are all by now retired. Plenty are dead, and a lot more moved on into other work. Teaching was an episode in their lives, and there's much to be said for the idea that it shouldn't be a life sentence. One who moved on is the social historian Bill Fishman.

He was a poor immigrant tailor's son from Whitechapel who did well at school and was rewarded by a white-collar job, as a public assistance clerk for the London county council in Bethnal Green. After six years in the army he signed up for emergency teacher training, and developed that flamboyant, expansive and enthusiastic style that captivates an audience in the street as much as it did in class at Morpeth school, Bethnal Green.

The LCC's promotion system elevated him to the job of head of Bethnal Green Junior Commercial and Technical Institute, a grand name for what was mainly an evening school. Juggling timetables and with a working day from early morning to late at night, he managed to combine this with taking a degree at the LSE. Then as the LCC's policies for post-school education got into their stride, his job became that of principal of Tower Hamlets College for Further Education, a desk-bound task of administration, mediation and endless meetings, a long way from the stimulation of the classroom.

Bill got bored, and hankered after the time to pursue historical research. His employers were generous. One year, they allowed him to take a visiting schoolmaster fellowship at Oxford, and another, to be a visiting professor at Columbia. But in 1969, back at his desk with the prospect of another 17 years before pension day, he abandoned caution and resigned. This was an act unheard of in the LCC/Ilea educational hierarchy. Nobody has recorded what long-suffering Doris Fishman said.

But fortune smiled on them. Another visiting professorship was offered in America, and a philanthropist, Barney Shine, had the acumen to endow a fellowship in Labour Studies at Queen Mary College, down the Mile End Road. And Bill Fishman positively blossomed. Everyone has seen him shepherding visitors through the ancient streets of Spitalfields and Stepney, evoking the history their battered buildings had witnessed.

He endeared himself to the anarchists with his prize-winning account of *East End Jewish Radicals*, and through his habit of directing all students to the Freedom Bookshop in Angel Alley. And he won universal respect with *East End, 1888*, a sermon from the past for Thatcher's Britain.

Now ten other scholars have produced the ultimate accolade for his 70th birthday, a book *Outsiders and Outcasts: essays in honour of William J Fishman* (Duckworth), studying parallel themes to his own: the German poor in London a century ago, the Limehouse Chinese considered a Yellow Peril, the Hackney fascists in the 1930s, the everyday relations between Jew and non-Jew in the East End, and the horrors of interwar unemployment. It was a happy day in 1946 when Acting Warrant Officer Grade II, Fishman, W, decided that his future was to be in education.

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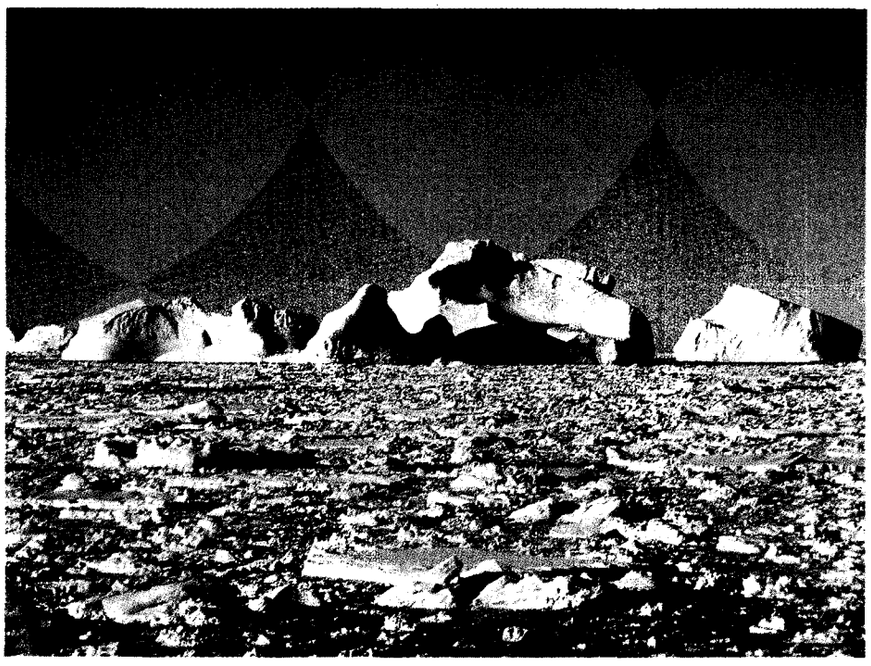

The ice age cometh

Could global warming trigger another ice age? **Pat Coyne** looks at new evidence which comes from the fossil snows of the Greenland icecap

The greenhouse effect has become science's very own, slow burn, moral panic. Well, perhaps "panic" is overstating it. If global warming has entered the public consciousness at all, it is as the rather pleasant prospect of, say, the British Isles enjoying a climate similar to that of the Mediterranean today. Nevertheless, the world is not short of doomsters pointing out the looming prospect of the earth being dessicated as temperatures rise inexorably. Deserts, it is argued, will grow larger, hurricanes more frequent and huge areas of agricultural land, such as the north American prairies, may become much less productive, threatening global famine.

There is however, an equal and opposite threat that seems to be have received far less attention—that of an ice age. Now, new evidence from ice-cores drilled through the Greenland ice sheet suggests that the Earth's climate, far from being essentially stable (human activities notwithstanding), has, in the past, shifted from warm to cold, and vice versa, extraordinarily quickly, sometimes in little more than a decade.

The idea of the polar weather front, normally resident over the extreme North Atlantic, suddenly expanding, perhaps as far south as Spain, dragging the sea ice behind it and plunging much of Europe into glacial conditions, is not one likely to endear itself in the continent's capitals. It would make Europe, if not quite uninhabitable, then about as habitable as Lapland. Yet the evidence is that that is exactly what has happened in the past, and moreover, because the processes governing climate are so complex and little understood, it is quite conceivable that the greenhouse effect could, far from causing general warming, trigger off a new ice age.

Ice ages have been the norm over the past few million years. They last typically 100,000 years or so, and are interspersed with warm periods (interglacials), like the present, lasting 12,000-20,000 years. In the last, which ended around 12,000 years ago, much of northern Europe, including most of Britain north of the Thames, as well as large swathes of north America, lay under ice sheets hundreds of feet thick.

The immediate cause of ice ages seems to be three separate cycles, or wobbles, of the earth on its axis as it orbits the sun. Known as the Milankovitch cycles, these last for 21,000 to 100,000 years and can combine to cause small, seasonal differences in the heat the Earth receives. The main reason why such small causes can have the dramatic effect of switching the Earth between ice age and interglacial, is the position of the continents, the result of continental drift. For most of the Earth's history, the climate has been warm, almost tropical, with only relatively minor variations in temperatures between equator and pole. The old supercontinent, Pangaea, began to break up 150 million years ago and, as a result of the pieces drifting apart, there is now land at one pole and an almost enclosed ocean at the other, a phenomenon probably unique in the Earth's history. This, together with the uplift of the Tibet plateau, meant that the previous pattern of atmospheric circulation, which brought heat quickly from the tropics to the poles, ceased to operate. By about 15 million years ago, icecaps had begun to develop, first in the south, then finally in the north. The end result of these geological processes was that the earth's climate changed from being stable and warm to being poised on a knife edge, with two alternating "stable" states, ice age and interglacial, and could be switched from one to the other by minor perturbations, such as the Milankovitch cycles.

The best information on the delicate balance of the atmosphere comes from Greenland and Antarctica, announced within the past month in the journal *Nature*. The Greenland Ice Core Project (GRIP), funded by the European Science Foundation, drilled at the highest point of the Greenland ice-sheet, to obtain a core made from snow and ice that had been deposited over a period of about 250,000 years. The snow falls seasonally and the core can be dated rather like tree rings. The temperature at which the snow fell is estimated by measuring the chemical composition of the atmospheric dust brought down with the snow, and also by measuring the ratio of the isotopes of oxygen, O^{16} and O^{18}, in the ice.

The results have been startling, not so much for what they tell us about the present Holocene interglacial but for allowing a far more detailed picture of the previous interglacial, the Eemian, which lasted about 20,000 years and ended about 115,000 years ago. Based on previous evidence from fossilised pollen and sea sediments, geologists had characterised the Eemian as a warm, relatively stable era with temperatures about 2°C higher than today. Hippopotamuses lived in the Thames, lions and elephants roamed northern Europe and much of the west Antarctic ice sheet had melted, producing sea levels 6-8 metres higher than now. Some climatologists have seen it as a model for the way our climate will evolve under the greenhouse effect.

The GRIP results paint a less idyllic picture. In the first part of the Eemian, temperatures dropped sharply several times, sometimes by as much as 10°C, the difference between, say, southern Spain and Northern Scandinavia today, sometimes within a period of ten to 30 years. Some cold spells lasted decades, others hundreds of years. After 8,000 years of fluctuating temperatures there was a warm period of about 2,000 years, after which the temperature fell abruptly to 5°C colder then it is now, equivalent to a moderate ice age. Temperatures then recovered for 1,000 years before finally oscillating as the period ended.

Our own Holocene period, by contrast has been very stable, with temperatures fluctuating, for the most part, by a factor of three or four times less than in the Eemian. Two questions immediately suggest themselves. First, is the stability of the Holocene a permanent

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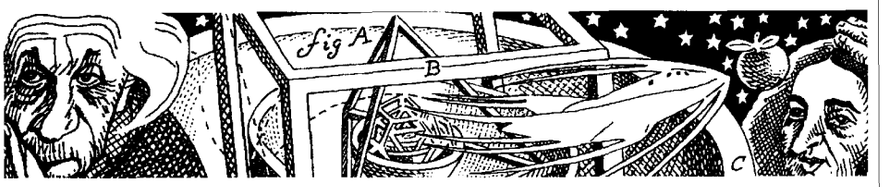
feature of the period or could it at some time in the future show the same rapid fluctuations? Second, was it the somewhat higher average temperatures of the Eemian that triggered the instabilities and, if so, what implications are there for the greenhouse effect?

Underlying these questions is the search for a mechanism that can cause massive changes of climate on the timescale of a decade or two. It could not have been changes in the ice-sheets; these take thousands of years at a minimum. One possibility is diversion of ocean currents, and here there may be a clue in what happened at the end of the last ice age, 12,000 years ago. For the first 2,000 years, the climate warmed rapidly. Then, abruptly, the process went into reverse. For about 800 years, the "Younger-Dryas" period, the ice age all but returned, with pack-ice drifting as far south as Spain. The evidence points to a cessation of the Gulf Stream, possibly caused by a massive outflow of cold, ice sheet melt-water into the North Atlantic, through the St Lawrence river.

The Gulf Stream dominates the climate of western Europe, bringing heat from the tropics and keeping Europe about 6°C warmer in winter than it would otherwise be. It is part of a giant system of ocean currents that flows round the world in a figure of eight, with warm surface currents and deep, cold return currents, equivalent to more than 20 times the flow of all the earth's rivers combined. The flow is maintained by the difference in salinity between the more salty North Atlantic and the less saline North Pacific. But if the salinity were reversed, so might the flow. One possible mechanism might be higher global temperatures from greenhouse gases, leading initially to significant melting of the polar ice and the outflow of the much less salty ice melt into the Arctic Ocean's only real outlet, the North Atlantic. That could be enough to halt the Gulf Stream, causing temperatures in northern Europe to plunge by around 6°C, overwhelming the greenhouse effect and perhaps recreating the Younger-Dryas period, or even triggering a full-blown ice age.

A nice irony, perhaps, but hardly worth the risk. Humanity, it turns out, has built its civilisations in conditions of climatic stability unusual—perhaps unique—over the past million or more years. Agricultural patterns are extremely sensitive to temperature changes and even the rate at which the greenhouse effect threatened to increase temperatures—2-3°C a century—was expected to put a massive questionmark over the ability of the world's agriculture to cope. If our present stable climate is merely an interlude, and especially if it turns out that the stunning variability of the Eemian was caused by its somewhat higher average temperatures, then the case for halting global warming becomes overwhelming. As J W C White, of the US Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, said in *Nature*, "If the Earth had an operating manual, the chapter on climate might begin with a caveat that the system had been adjusted at the factory for optimum comfort, so don't touch the dials."

DIELECTRICS



Positive polls and a furore over A-level results. Are things beginning to look up for British science, asks **Pat Coyne**?

It's not often that one sees praise for the *Daily Telegraph* in these pages, but an encomium or two is certainly due for the *Telegraph's* coverage of science, the best of the nationals. A pat on the back is also due for the opinion poll that the paper conducted on public attitudes to science. Why the government, especially the newly formed Office of Public Service and Science, is not conducting similar surveys is a mystery, the more so since the *Telegraph* poll shows that only 17 per cent of the public has even heard of the OPSS and hardly more have heard of science minister William Waldegrave. At least he might get a bit of publicity by publishing the findings.

The poll asked, among other things, which of various activities did the respondents feel *least* necessary (an interesting inversion of the normal polling approach, but let it pass) to the cultural life of Britain? Easily topping the unpops was religion with 39 per cent, followed by sport (26), politics (24), arts (18) and media (18). Science, with 15 per cent, was beaten only by books (4) and education (2).

There are two surprises in the survey. First, the apparent acceptance by the general public of science as part of the *cultural* life of Britain. In some, exalted, circles the notion of science as culture would be regarded as eccentric, to say the least. There is in Britain an inverse snobbery that amounts almost to *trahison des clercs*. The more educated, the less shame in admitting, even boasting, of ignorance of science. The presumption must be that an acquaintance with science is unnecessary for the rounded human being. Science, to adapt Sartre, is other people. Biologists, astronomers, plumbers, mechanics, they're all the same—little men you call in when you need a job doing.

The second surprise is the high esteem in which science appears to be held. It might just be hypocrisy, or kidding the pollsters, but how then to explain the lowly estimation of religion? It may be optimistic, but there are one or two other straws in the wind that suggest that attitudes towards science are beginning to change.

The *Telegraph* survey coincided, more or less, with the annual publication of the GCSE and A-level results from Britain's schools. These normally produce an undercurrent of moans about the falling numbers of pupils taking sciences, and associated anguish about lack of industrial competitiveness, need to invest in technology and so on. As with most rituals, the breastbeating traditionally lasts a few days and then the subject is forgotten until next year.

For some reason, very difficult to fathom, this year these grumbles have turned into a roar. It has been almost impossible over the past couple of weeks to open a newspaper without reading something or other about the subject and, astonishingly, the debate threatens to move on from ritualised hand-wringing to a determination that "something must be done". Quite what, of course, has yet to be decided, but let us be grateful for some progress.

One easy—and absolutely deserving—target is the absurd specialisation of English (and Welsh) A-levels, which force 16 year olds to chose between science and arts subjects and to study three, at most four, subjects for university entrance. Nowhere else in Europe—or quite possibly in the world —is this sort of educational strait-jacket forced on unformed minds.

Among the many taking a potshot at A-levels last week was Sir Denis Noble, Oxford professor, one of the founders of Save British Science and doughty campaigner for the voice of science to be heard in the land. Noble picks out the attempt by some universities to fill vacant science places by offering conversion courses for those who had taken arts A-levels. "By offering science places to arts students, the universities are tacitly admitting what they have denied over many years; that it is false to say that only pupils who had spent 90 per cent of their sixth form studying maths and science could hope to benefit from a university science course."

Noble's central plea is to bring science into the educational mainstream, to get away from the idea that a science degree must mean a job in science. That idea is still current. The *Financial Times* joined the fray by adopting a classic market argument—if there were a shortage of scientists, then their salaries would begin to rise. Since there is no sign of bidding up scientists' wages, there is no shortage. QED.

For the normally sensible *FT* to indulge in this sort of fatuous drivel shows just how far the rot has gone. Try applying that line of argument to graduates in "Greats" (Latin, Greek and ancient history), which doubtless includes a few *FT* journalists. What's the market like for fluent Latin speakers? Science is every bit as good a training for the mind as Latin. It should be valued for its intellectual and aesthetic qualities, and not just as a tool for work. It is, in short, an integral part of culture, neither more nor less.

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Not such a grim reaper: "Dr Faustus Lights The Lights"

Angus Calder praises an Edinburgh Festival programme that brought music, love and politics into harmony around the work of James Macmillan

Chords of justice

Dugald Stewart was a much-loved university philosopher who taught Walter Scott and the *Edinburgh Reviewers*. On Calton Hill, his admirers erected a handsome and huge memorial, near the abortive attempt to reconstruct the Parthenon that gave us just one colonnade. Stewart would no doubt have been tickled by the thought of the ghost of Agamemnon declaiming from the floodlit top of his monument.

This was, literally, one of the "high lights" of EAST Scotland's promenade production of *Klytemnaestra's Bairns*, Bill Dunlop's version of the *Oresteia* in sword-sharp Scots. "Noo ye ken whit is justice, an whit forgieness," says the same effective actor, in drag as Athena, at the end of our midnight tour of the Hill's architecture, enriched by terrific city views and led by lively musicians. Yawps from an accordion worked especially well, and the two tough lasses who spoke as Chorus and danced as Furies almost throughout deserve some very special award.

This said about as much as theatre can about what's going on in Bosnia (and Afghanistan, and Angola, and . . .). Gertrude Stein was definitely saying nothing at all about world events in 1938 when she wrote *Dr Faustus Lights the Lights*, though the war that ensued prevented performance of her libretto until 1951. With a witty new score by Hans Peter Kuhn, directed by Robert Wilson, this came to the Lyceum from the Hebbel Theater, Berlin. And it packed the place out.

Faustus was good, harmless fun—like watching an extended version of one of those clever TV commercials that are so much better than most of the scheduled programmes, even if you can't remember later what they were trying to sell. Wilson could certainly have marketed Karla Trippel, Faustus' adorable dog, and wealthier persons might have been tempted to purchase the entire comely young cast—three Fausts, three Marguerites, two Mephistos and seven others. Stein's mazy word play was matched by exquisitely danced visual gags. I thought poorly of those elements in the audience who clearly felt they'd had enough after the second of three acts (performed without interval), and began to clap loudly. The lighting really *was* superb.

Brian McMaster has proved, with this and other *coups*, a remarkably brave festival director. The music programme this year has been as well planned as the theatre. McMaster himself refuses to admit that pairing Schubert and Janacek in concert after concert has had poor Franz on the ropes in bouts above his proper weight.

The Carmina Quartet rescued our Viennese pal by playing the Czech's ferocious *Kreutzer Sonata* quartet with such inappropriate sweetness that Schubert's last, in G major, was not upstaged. David Robertson, a remarkable conductor of whom we will hear much more, prevented Schubert's early opera *Die Freunde von Salamanka* from deliquescing completely in a concert performance, but then Janacek's *Sarka* wiped it off the platform.

Frank Dunlop, the former director, used to appease the New Music lobby by giving up weekends at the Queen's Hall, where maybe 40 of us could celebrate and salivate well out of everyone's way over high-class performers in far-out novelties. Unwitting taxpayers covered the megalosses. McMaster has dared to foreground James Macmillan. Between Thursday evening at 7.30 (King's Theatre) and Saturday at 9.30 (Usher Hall), I heard 11 of his works, three of them in world premières, at four major venues.

Macmillan, at 34, is older than Bartók when he wrote *Bluebeard's Castle* (1910), Stravinsky when he composed *The Rite of Spring* (1913) and Messiaen when he improvised his great *Quartet for the End of Time* in a Nazi prison camp (1940). So a "retrospective" is apter than some have fancied. By now, Macmillan has established a distinctive voice. His rapturous receptions by Prom audiences show that performances of works by the three masters mentioned have made the paths straight for his emphatic idiom, derived from what might be called "mainstream" (not 12-note) modernism.

Macmillan's power derives from his complete sincerity. He is not only a Catholic for whom the mystery of Incarnation is an everyday preoccupation, but a liberationist who talks without qualification of socialist revolution. In the King's Theatre, his *Visitatio Sepulchri* dramatised the terror and joy of the Resurrection. Something happened in Jerusalem in 36 BC to cause the rise of a major new religion, though the four Gospel accounts are contradictory. Macmillan makes the event conceivable.

In St Giles High Kirk, where a black statue of John Knox glowered helplessly across at the choir, we heard *Cantos Sagrados*, in which Macmillan sets two political poems by the Chilean Ariel Dorfman and verses about the Virgin by a Mexican woman. Christ, most movingly, is incarnated in the political prisoner about to be shot and the rifleman who asks his forgiveness. That Aeschylean lines echoes: "Ye ken whit is justice an whit forgieness."

Epiclesis, Macmillan's new trumpet concerto, gave Leonard Slatkin's Philarmonia and the spectacular John Wallace a hard time at its Usher Hall première. But the audience were exhilarated by its brazen affirmation of a living god who sounded at times not unlike Miles Davis (and behaved like him when Wallace walked out to play the last bars offstage with a mute).

Macmillan will get even better. It is keen

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timbres and percussive rhythm that have grabbed his increasing hordes of groupies. He expresses what Edmund Burke called "the sublime"—terror and exultation—superbly, with burning brass and blasting drums, and can move from that to delicate woodwind lament or luminous serenity.

What he hasn't engaged with so far is the middle ground of experience, where the humanity of Janacek flourishes: the mundane, sullied motions of erotic feeling and confused social interaction. Schubert's finest music, come to think of it, may accomplish something politically significant, helping us to love our suffering fellows as it picks its way through depression and emotional conflict.

Consonance between art and psychotherapy is an explicit theme in Robert Lepage's production of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* for Canadian Opera at the Playhouse. When the piece was written, in 1908, Freud was trying to sort out the Viennese bourgeoisie. This very nasty work is a rambling monodrama for loony soprano, but Lepage has an on-stage psychiatrist who literally goes up (and down) the huge wall that dominates his setting, as well as a handsome young chap representing the lover whom the protagonist may or may not have murdered.

I never want to see *Erwartung* again, but am glad to have caught this fine staging, cinematic rather than operatic. It opposes to the music's late-romantic ravings images of hard-edged, witty surrealism and chaste (yes, I mean that) neoclassical grace. Rebecca Blankenship sings and acts splendidly.

About Lepage's *Bluebeard's Castle*, I have to say that I've seen previous productions of this two-hander that have moved and excited me much more. His singers, Jane Gilbert and Victor Braun—both very good, neither stunning—characterise their parts very fully. We have a burnt-out, desperate Bluebeard and a dynamic Judith who skips around more than most. Richard Bradshaw, conducting, also give fresh, close attention to Bartok's marvellous score.

The result is absorbing. But his reading, fine for the feverish lyricism of the passage where Bluebeard's fourth door opens on a garden, mutes the colossal surge that greets the "empire" revealed behind the fifth. Lepage's neoclassical restraint, which produces many beautifully lit effects, also takes the edge off the final scene. When the sixth door opens, a lake of tears floods, very discreetly, across the front of the stage, and is later transformed by lighting into blood. Through this swim Bluebeard's three previous wives. This is a superb coup, but perverse: undifferentiated blood-red nymphs do not represent the distinctions—dawn, noon, evening—marked by libretto and score.

This said, Lepage is a vastly imaginative director who honestly strives to serve great texts. His *Coriolanus*, in French, visits Nottingham Playhouse in November, and I very much hope that BR train schedules won't prevent me from reaching that awkwardly sited city. If I meet Andreas Schiff on the way I'll apologise for calling him "German" last week: he is, like Bartok, Hungarian.

Andy Lavender goes out on the fringe and learns body language

Dances of life and death

The story goes that, when the renowned *avant garde* director Peter Sellars arrived in Edinburgh, he wondered why nobody else was doing anything serious. Given the number of posters plastered across the city advertising stand-up comics, his surprise was understandable.

During the Thatcher years, alternative comedy seemed, well, alternative: a raw blast emanating from smoke-filled rooms above pubs, directed at everything chic but callous about the 1980s. Now, with its hierarchy of stars and its brewery sponsorships, alternative comedy seems, well, the establishment.

How ironic, then that Sellars' production of Aeschylus' *The Persians* should prove one of the angriest and most anti-establishment shows in Edinburgh this year, its anti-Gulf war message loud and clear. In truth, however, if Sellars had wanted to find other "serious" shows with dramatic flair, he would not have had to search very hard. It *was* possible to avoid the comics. In fact, three things stood out about the shows I most enjoyed. They were performance rather than word-based; they expressed their ideas through simple but powerful imagery; and most of them came from abroad.

In the latter case, it is a Scotsman, Richard Demarco, who has made a habit of shaming the English by bringing to Edinburgh remarkable theatre that is never seen south of the border. This year, his modestly titled Demarco European Art Foundation took up temporary occupation of St Mary's primary school, the unlikely venue for two vivid dance pieces. In *Medea*, the Greek myth about a mother who murders her children is turned by Belgrade's Bitef Theatre into a show packed with visual metaphors. Sonja Vukicevic performed in a black dress and vibrant red lipstick, in an open-air courtyard strewn with white feathers. Setting her face like a Greek mask of anguish, she ran in sweeping strides, or indulged in obsessive little gestures, or leapt repeatedly against a courtyard wall. This was not the show for those allergic either to chicken-down or to complex political symbolism. Towards the end of the piece, Vukicevic swished a long red sash behind her, sending up a flurry of feathers, or wound it round her body, while snatches of the *Internationale* and helicopter noises played on the soundtrack.

Here was serious theatre all right; to do with the blood of birth-giving, the murder of innocents and the red flag of communism. If Vukicevic was convincingly a woman in emotional crisis, she also suggested a country—a continent, even—at a point of turmoil.

Bitef Theatre is from Belgrade. You can understand, then, if the company has a sharpened sense of the historical process. The same applies to *The Soirée*, presented by the Hungarian Compagnie Yvette Bozsik; another wordless dance piece to a pulsing soundtrack. By what strange coincidence did the company arrive at an image that featured in *Medea*: a line of performers drinking champagne with blank expressions, a picture of joyless celebration? There is no sparkle to the bubbly in Central Europe.

Again the style of dance was obsessive. A young woman, the impressive Yvette Bozsik, in a dingy ballroom dress with bustle, shuffles on with her back to the audience. She is joined by a colleague in a skimpy frilled number, then by a man in a dress suit. *The Soirée* is derived from Sartre's *Huis Clos*. Hell, in this instance, is other people at a cocktail party—but what kind of party is this?

When the dancers come together, it is in grotesque parodies of formal dancing, or bleakly lascivious squabbles over which woman gets the man. The threesome slow march on the spot to iron-curtain military music. Disquietingly, it is hard to know whether this purgatory is before or after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

With choreography central to offerings from Communicado, Robert Wilson and even one of James Macmillan's music-theatre pieces, it seemed that this was the Year of Dance. Up to the moment as always, even Neil Bartlett was in on the act in his Gloria company's new show, *Night After Night*, where dance symbolised a more extravagant and preferable life that only the theatre seems to offer. This, at least, was partly Bartlett's point. He narrates, and plays his own father out on the town in 1958. As he waits for his wife, he is sucked into a very 1990s creation, an ironical- musical that puts the backstage staff centre-stage: gay men all, for whom the world inside the theatre is rather more attractive than the world outside it.

Bartlett and the cast wear smart dress suits, which give way improbably (theatrically) to cowboy outfits, sailor suits and the like in a chorus line of comic vignettes. A camp fantasia, then, but if *Night After Night* appears to share the superficiality of the musical, there is a real depth struggling to remain unseen. Bartlett as his father is lugubrious, sleek-haired, anxious. Or should that read Bartlett as *himself* is lugubrious . . . ? The show is bright and breezy, but it is also a delicate exploration of the links between the history of gay culture and gay experience now. Making do simply with a few chairs, a few props and a few well-chosen costumes, it has a real grandeur of feeling.

This is not the same as a *zeitgeist*, and only a fool would assume that one of *those* would emerge from the different kinds of theatre on offer. The Central Europeans were bleak, Gloria was optimistic. Downright cynical was Brad Fraser's *The Ugly Man*, presented by the vaunted Canadian company One Yel-

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low Rabbit. Fraser is known to British audiences for his earlier play *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love*. His latest work is set on a ranch in the American Midwest. An ornery tale of a pretty teenager about to marry a man she doesn't love, it takes dark and comic turns when an ugly stranger arrives, and everyone is revealed to be lustful, self-serving and duplicitous. This is great fun, and if it loses control at the end, half a good play is still something to be thankful for.

Fraser's Midwest calls to mind that of Sam Shepard, as he scratches the veneer off respectable American behaviour; but his tone of insidious comedy has greater affinity with David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, most notably in the sequence where Forest, the eponymous Ugly Man, breaks the neck (onstage) of the feeble bridegroom—to appropriate gasps and even guffaws from the audience—and then exits unruffled to bugger the groom's brother.

One Yellow Rabbit has a performance style as singular as the company's name. Exaggerated double-takes, freeze frames, scenes punctuated by raw bursts of countryfied electric guitar music, give the show an irreverent, stylised quality which lifts it above the confines of transatlantic Method acting.

So this was more than the Year of Dance: it was the Year of Physical Performance. Steven Berkoff, for instance, gave a brutal, beautifully controlled one-man display of physical theatre, but here was an artist Britain knows and either loves or hates. We know much less about the Georgian Film Actors' Studio, in Edinburgh with a traditional telling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The company's performance appears spontaneous and energetic, but is founded on detail and discipline. Tableaux form and melt, and gestures held just long enough to register without seeming staccato. It would be joyous to see more of them.

Londoners, at least, will see more of the Paines Plough production of *Crossfire* by the French playwright Michel Azama. Paines Plough is devoted to new writing, and Azama has provided them quite definitely with a playwright's play. *Crossfire* explores the unpitying effect of warfare in an abstracted 20th-century city, and in this it connects with Howard Barker's *A Hard Heart* and Edward Bond's *Jackets*. The emergence of one character from a body gag, leaking sand from his clothes and mouth, summed up fairly concisely the play's attitude to its subject.

This suggests that Azama's imagery, especially where matched with his stark dialogue (nicely translated by Nigel Gearing), can be particularly effective. Judicious pruning will do the play a great service for its run at London's Cockpit theatre, but in its more striking moments it shows destructive isolationism as a backdrop to the late-20th century, but as a modern state of mind. Even so, I missed the physical expressiveness that graced other shows. Perhaps the Edinburgh Festival this year proved that you don't need to rely on words alone to make shows of great substance. For here was physical theatre not just knocking on the door but entering the house and taking up residence. The theatre of the future? We could do a lot worse.

Clint: exhibiting his patina, rather like the moss that grows on old august statues

Jonathan Romney on Clint's new complex action hero

The male monolith

How much mythic resonance can one man carry? Last year, Clint Eastwood single-handedly gave the Western back all its tight-lipped integrity in *Unforgiven*; now here he is making something fresh out of the stale old action movie with *In the Line of Fire* (on general release). He didn't direct this time—that honour goes to Wolfgang Petersen, redeeming himself magnificently after the rambling idiocy of his cod-Hitchcockian *Shattered*. But Eastwood's presence, which grows more iconic as each hair turns grey, dominates the film and gives an already tight, intelligent piece of work a real sense of pathetic stature.

As ever, Eastwood doesn't have to do that much—he's rarely had to emote, *Unforgiven* notwithstanding. Usually it's just a case of running, firing, staying mum and exuding some kind of unspecific intent. Here, he's taken on a nicely acidic self-deprecating humour, miles from the jokey, cigar-chomping, cartoon he's allowed himself to become on occasion. He's reticent here, but his reticence gets more eloquent as his characters get older; it's not so much *substance* he's taken on, but rather a patina, like the moss that grows on old statues and makes them twice as august.

Here he's helped in any case by Jeff Maguire's well-honed script, which gives him a complex character and a familiar but inventively reworked premise—he's the good cop trying to stop a crazed killer getting to the president. But the story packs both a mythic dimension and a personal one. Eastwood's character, Frank Horrigan, is an ageing presidential security man who's regarded by colleagues as a "dinosaur", a "borderline burn-out". Of course, he's been dragging around 30 years of torment—he was in JFK's car the day he got shot, and part of him is stuck in Dallas (a young Eastwood has actually been sewn magically into film of the motorcade). Not only is he living on borrowed time (he's convinced he could have stopped the bullet), but he's also living in a world he has no place in, and one he feels responsible for. Like much of middle America, he's convinced that US history (as a *utopian* myth) ended with JFK's death. "Everything," he muses, "would be different today, *if* . . . "

What is all that guilt and impotence, if not the flip side of a megalomaniac fantasy of omnipotence? If Horrigan seems to embody all that's still noble—albeit scarred—in modern America, it's because he *sees* himself as noble but scarred. There's a self-aggrandising pathos in him that is destined to meet its match; and that comes in the form of an all-knowing enigma on the other end of the phone. Horrigan enters into a sort of telephonic, telepathic tag match with a mysterious would-be assassin (John Malkovich) who's obsessed with presidential killings, but who likes to call himself "Booth" rather than "Oswald". "Booth had more style," he says, and you can see why. Like the Booth who shot Lincoln in a theatre, this Booth is a performer *and* a spectator—he likes to watch the spectacle from afar, but he loves to be part of it too. In addition, he's a master of disguises, seeing his mission as a game, a grand perfor-

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mance (indeed, he seems to wear disguises purely for his own amusement). A multiple, feminised foil to Eastwood's male, monolithic self-identity, Malkovich is superb, playing up his own narcissistic tendencies to the hilt, glacial one minute, on the edge of histrionics the next—a prissy, sardonic face in the crowd, lips pursed with murderous intent.

They're doubles, of course—"Booth" and Horrigan turn out to have similar misgivings about post-JFK America. But his similarity makes Booth a remarkably effective psychoanalyst, too. He knows everything there is to know about his foe, knows how to hit the right buttons to get the responses he wants, how to manipulate silences. This is, after all, an analytic game all the way.

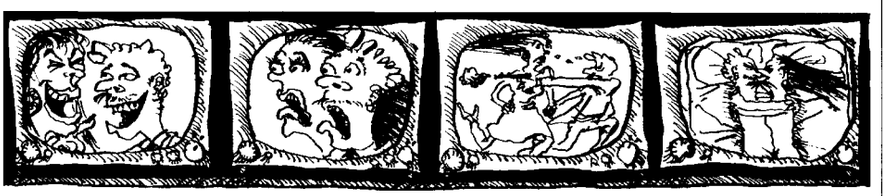
What Horrigan's after is a cure, and that's only possible through repetition. He needs to relive his trauma, to get close to the bullet again, but properly this time, maybe destroying himself in the process (his is a death wish on a historical scale). In effect, Horrigan needs to grow up: he's a case of arrested development. He can't get over being a young man who outlived a symbolic father; now he's an old man, but a father-figure *manqué*, who thinks he can only achieve patriarch status by defeating one younger man and saving (dying for?) another. That's why the president is a complete blank in this film—he's just a symbolic function, but entirely voided of the powerful symbolic charge that JFK embodied, and which died with him.

The oedipal bewilderment that's apparently part of America's post-JFK trauma seems to have been sparked off again by the advent of Clinton and the popular desire to see him as Kennedy *redivivus*. There's certainly plenty of scope for trauma when a nation obsessively invests the hopes associated with youth into a role that's so fundamentally regarded as a patriarchal one. It's no accident, then, that the one resounding—albeit confused—attempt so far to paint a state-of-the-nation picture of Clinton-era America has been *Falling Down*, in which social breakdown is equated with a crisis in the state of fatherhood itself.

A failed son trying to be a good (punitive) father is clearly a more complex twist on the Eastwood action hero than we're used to seeing. Eastwood is playing a finely judged game with his images here—Horrigan is a traumatised Dirty Harry trying to sound out and mend his own flaws. But he's also trying to mend time, to reconcile two distinct eras and two distinct myths. He's mediating between an age in which the president was hero, and a post-lapsarian epoch in which the assassin has supplanted him in the popular imagination—a state of affairs ironically bemoaned here by the assassin himself.

In the Line of Fire is about an attempt to topple the bad hero from the throne. In that sense, it's a conservative film, bemoaning what it sees as the degradation of the hero role. But its analysis is absolutely lucid. The old myths can't come back, as even Horrigan knows—he's been through the Nixon era, after all—and the past is relivable only as a symbolic game of cops-and-killers. It *is* a terrific game, though.

JACI STEPHEN



The top lads at the Edinburgh Television Festival have sobered up to meet the real world

There were several things that took your breath away at this year's Edinburgh Television Festival: the price of a glass of champagne at my hotel (£6.95), the price of a room there (£155), and its amiable but appalling service. But even higher up the list was Phillippa Giles, the renowned BBC drama producer who chaired the drama section, Dreaming of Hollywood. After 90 minutes, there were only seven words that could spring from delegates' mouths: Don't give up the day job, Phillippa.

Now Ms Giles is undoubtedly a great talent in her chosen field, but the humiliation she heaped on her audience and one of her panellists was pure Monty Python. The session aimed to examine the difference between TV and theatre drama, and throughout there was a demand to encourage new writers to both genres. National Theatre director Richard Eyre called for television to move away from a "system of values that mimics the movies" and for writers, directors and producers to respect the medium for itself.

A man from Tyne Tees took the microphone and explained that, in his area, there were numerous schemes to encourage writers. He elaborated. Ms Giles sat stony-faced. "Okay," she said, dismissively. "Well, I suppose it's quite okay." The man kept hold of the mike: "What do you mean, 'quite okay'?"

Our good chairperson went on: he was being a bit smug, wasn't he? Coming here to boast about his silly little schemes, what sort of permanent contribution was that going to make? (I paraphrase merely to capture the spirit of the piece.)

Next, Ms Giles explained how "we all" were surprised when David Aukin was appointed as Channel 4's head of drama. And what about Charles Denton, coming in to head BBC drama? "If you make appointments like these, you have to take responsibility for them," she said.

In a session designed to encourage new writers (a large number of whom would have been sitting in the audience), it was ironic that Ms Giles' contribution probably alienated more authors in one fell swoop than at any moment in the history of TV drama. She may be a great producer, but if she carries on like this she won't have anything to produce.

In comparison, Denis Potter's opening MacTaggart Lecture took up little of delegates' attention. Even at £6.95 a glass, champagne in the hotel bar seemed the better option. I'd read the speech in advance and thought it so vicious I could do without the performance. It seemed extraordinary that, just a few weeks ago, Potter was railing against the press (the Murdoch press, in particular) for its vitriol, yet here he was presenting the oral equivalent. Presumably, the difference is that it's only vitriol directed against himself that's wrong and offensive.

The TV Festival is undoubtedly a more sober affair than it once was. The people who were once key players in the all-night partying scenes are now key-playing executives and millionaires who have to get up early for breakfast meetings. Only GMTV provides any fun these days (I arrived back from its Sunday brunch at 7.30pm), and you don't even have to talk about Lorraine Kelly to qualify for participation.

The overwhelming feeling over the four days, however, was of being in a men's club to which women are only invited as guests who should be seen and not heard. The scheduling session featured The Lads (Grade, Elstein, Jackson, Yentob); the BBC session featured The Lads (Phillis, Thomson, Bolton, Morrison), and contributions from the floor were almost exclusively male. When a woman opened her mouth, she generally did her sex no favours. Apart from Ms Giles' bizarre comments, there was an embarrassing outburst from a woman during the session with director-general John Birt.

The embarrassing ones generally come from the regions, BBC community programmes or the education department. This woman came from the latter. What she wanted was a figurehead, she explained, and—oh, sorry if this sounded emotional—but Mr Birt was so far away, and how did she get to him, and oh, this was probably being emotional . . .

It's been reported that Birt gave her short shrift. He didn't. Any time that he gave her would have been too long. "Bugger off and get on with making programmes" would have sufficed.

The problem with the BBC isn't Birt. It's the whingers on the periphery who wouldn't last two minutes in any other organisation. If they want love and support, they should pay a therapist to give it to them. If they don't like the way the organisation is having to come to terms with the real world (like every other business), they should get out and take up embroidery.

As Bob Phillis, the deputy director-general, said during the BBC debate: the Corporation is not in danger of destroying itself from within, but from without. Unlike my hotel.

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Relative values

EINSTEIN: A LIFE IN SCIENCE
Michael White and John Gribbin
Simon & Schuster, £16.99
THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ALBERT EINSTEIN
Roger Highfield and Paul Carter
Faber & Faber, £14.99

Susan Aldridge

The figure of Albert Einstein still dominates 20th-century science. His theories have shaped the way scientists view the physical world, while his persona has affected public perception of the scientists. There is an obvious parallel between Einstein's immense popularity, in his day, and the current fame of the cosmologist Stephen Hawking. We seem fascinated by the archetype of the scientist as an unworldly genius of incomprehensible brilliance.

Gribbin and White do little to challenge the conventional view of Einstein as a saintly yet lovable personality with a head so full of equations that he often forgot to put his socks on. Instead, their book emphasises Einstein's ideas. It is written to the same formula as their recent popular biography of Hawking, with Gribbin explaining the science, and episodes from the life described by White.

Einstein was the architect of the theory of relativity, which, while being the best explanation of gravity we have, also manages to defy common sense with its talk of objects shrinking and getting heavier as they approach the speed of light. The strength of this book lies in the way Gribbin conveys the importance and meaning of relativity, from its experimental verification by Arthur Eddington in 1919 to the insights it has allowed into the recent discoveries of phenomena such as pulsars, quasars and black holes.

Relativity was not Einstein's only scientific achievement. Although 1919 saw his emergence as a public personality, his most intense efforts actually predate this by some years. His scientific genius lay in his broad vision of nature. In 1905—often referred to as the *annus mirabilis*—he produced three major papers. Only one of these dealt with relativity; the other two consisted of a mathematical proof for the existence of molecules and an exploration of the photoelectric effect—a phenomenon that can only be explained if light is viewed as particles, rather than waves.

The paper on the photoelectric effect represented a major contribution to quantum theory. Einstein's subsequent opposition to the element of uncertainty that emerged as an inevitable part of the theory is summed up in his famous quotation: "God does not play dice." Nevertheless, as Gribbin points out, his strenuous attempts to disprove quantum theory forced its proponents, such as Niels Bohr and David Bohm, to lace their ideas on a firmer theoretical and experimental footing.

Genius, lover . . . rat? Einstein in 1912, when he began his affair with Elsa

Like relativity, quantum theory lies outside everyday experience—yet it also works. It underpins most of chemistry, our understanding of DNA, ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect, and has led to the development of lasers and computer chips.

The last two decades of Einstein's life were spent at the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, in pursuit of a "grand unified theory" in which one set of equations would link gravity with the electromagnetic forces that hold matter together at the atomic level. Although he made little progress, and many in the scientific community felt he was sadly out of touch, the search for this kind of unified theory remains one of the chief preoccupations of theoretical physicists today.

But what were the roots of Einstein's genius? Einstein himself attributed his achievements to a childish innocence that most of us lose on transition to adulthood, but which he retained to the end of his life. Certainly the unorthodoxy and resistance to authority needed to challenge conventional wisdom made themselves known from an early age.

The historical context of Einstein's life is well described by White, who documents his emergence as a public personality, his pacifism and his moral dilemma over whether America should develop the atom bomb ahead of Hitler. However, considering that much new material has emerged from the Einstein archives, there is little here that does not conform to the Einstein myth. When Einstein is described as "brimming with paradoxes", all that is meant is that he rebelled against human authority but was intrigued by the rules of mathematics.

In contrast, Highfield and Carter draw extensively on the new material and focus almost exclusively on Einstein's private life. What emerges is a rather unsympathetic portrait of a man who presented his repressed emotions as a form of saintliness and who was highly disdainful of women—yet desperately in need of mothering.

It has long been known that Einstein experienced many of the problems of lesser mortals in his early life: a teacher who said he would never amount to much, unemployment, divorce and wrangles over child support. What stunned the scientific community in 1990 were claims that his first wife, Mileva Maric, may have been the major contributor to the theory of relativity. While it now seems almost certain that Maric provided emotional support rather than scientific input, the revelations by her Serbian biographers focused attention on Einstein's first marriage. It is this story and its ramifications that Highfield and Carter develop.

Maric was certainly a scientific high-flyer, but a promising career and a passion for the emerging discipline of psychology were cut short when she gave birth to Einstein's illegitimate daughter in 1902, an episode suppressed by his supporters. There are hints that Einstein pressurised Maric to have the child adopted, but her eventual fate remains unknown. The couple married the following year and went on to have two sons, although it seems that Maric never came to terms with giving away their daughter.

The marriage soon soured, and Einstein began an affair with Elsa, his cousin, who was a woman in the mould of his dominating mother, Pauline. Some of Einstein's letters from this time suggest that, in his view, Maric's mind had been poisoned by her study of science. It was certainly important to him that Elsa was his intellectual inferior, content to cosset him and protect him from the outside world.

Meeting a female mind as formidable as his own was an unnerving experience. Although Einstein valued his friendship with Marie Curie, he confessed to friends that he felt repelled by her. "Madame Curie is very intelligent but has the soul of a herring," he complained. Meanwhile his flirtations with female admirers were to undermine his second marriage. His relations with his sons (one of whom died in a mental hospital) remained at best uneasy after his divorce from Maric.

All this is fascinating stuff, but at times Highfield and Carter seem to take an excessive pleasure is dismantling the Einstein myth. There is even a touch of the tabloids about their epilogue, which describes a secret interview with a woman claiming to be an-

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other illegitimate child of Einstein, and plans to conduct DNA tests to check the claim.

Although the two books convey markedly different assessments of Einstein as a human being, both are welcome because the lives of scientists rarely attract the same scrutiny as politicians and other media performers. Bringing scientists to life undoubtedly has a useful part to play in restoring science as part of our culture.

Beat roots

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM S BURROUGHS 1945-1959
Oliver Harris (editor)
Picador, £17.50

Michael Horovitz

Burroughs' letters display none of the chameleon grovelling to different recipients' prejudices that Philip Larkin's do, although many include all-American counterparts to Larkin's schoolboyish fantasising, private jokes and barely parodic bigotry. About 140 of these 180 or so letters were addressed to Allen Ginsberg, another 25 to Jack Kerouac, with a couple each to Neal Cassady, Paul Bowles and other writers.

Oliver Harris points out in his introduction that "writing to Ginsberg was one of only two constant habits" throughout these years of "turbulent change", the other being Burroughs' continual recourse to heroin and other drugs. The recurrent topics are drugs, writing, sex'n'love, common friends or acquaintances, travel and money. In the preface to *Junkie* (1953), Burroughs recalled how, after Harvard, he "played around the edges of crime" in Manhattan until, in the mid-1940s, he became addicted because he had "no strong motivations in any other direction".

Despite repeated attempts, he only seriously began to kick the habit after apomorphine treatment in London in 1956. Back in Tangier, he told Ginsberg: "I have entered a change more drastic than adolescence or early childhood. *Interzone* has taken complete shape . . . the work involved in this novel is tremendous. I really have to give time to editing and typing of material, which keeps coming like I can never catch up. But the schema becomes always clearer. Benway is emerging as a figure comparable to the Grand Inquisitor in *Brothers Karamazov*." This was to become *Naked Lunch*, in which nearly all the uniquely Burroughsian literary qualities achieved a sustained apotheosis.

Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs are among the very few writers to have brought anything enduringly communicative back from drug-taking; but although their first writings were pitched primarily to one another, this aspect comes across much more strongly in their novels and poems than in letters. Without drug-induced dissolutions of time, place and censorship, the radical breakthroughs of Kerouac's spontaneous bop prose, Ginsberg's *Howl* and *Kaddish*, and the collaged juxtapositions of *Naked Lunch* are unlikely to have occurred to their authors. Yet about the best Burroughs manages by way of a dope notation in these letters—apart from the wild Tangerine phantasmagoria of the late 1950s—is: "Just took three drags of the righteous gage, man, 23 skidoo the joint is jumping", which is only worldwide par for the silly-cig course.

But when Burroughs wants, as he frequently does, to kvetch at something or someone, his ear, eye and mind close in with lethal incision—as in his dispassionate resumé of Cassady's mission on the road: ". . . a voyage which for sheer compulsive pointlessness compares favourably with the mass migrations of the Mayans". On the other hand, Burroughs himself peregrinated a lot farther between 1945 and 1959: from New York to New Orleans to east Texas to Mexico City to Florida to the jungles of Central and South America to Rome to Tangier to NYC to London, Copenhagen and Paris. He was mainly on the run from the law and/or addictions, or in quest of a richer sex and/or drug life.

Few of these letters approach for me, as they do for Harris, the calibre of the old boy's self-edited books, let alone amounting to Burroughs' "masterpiece", as some reviewers are suggesting. He didn't conceive of writing in such terms until the late 1950s, if then. There are entertaining flashes of the wryly pouting stylist to come ("A reporter from *Life* came down—queer to be sure, but about as appetising as a hamper of dirty laundry"), but essentially these letters are revealing only as an apprentice novelist's diary-cum-sketchbook.

In the course of the book, one observes Burroughs eventually weaning himself off his dependencies on junk, and on Ginsberg as lover, protégé, confidant, agent, recipient and editor of routines and other literary-philosophical speculations, and as a lifeline from self-imposed exile. This first volume closes with a letter to the poet from Paris at the end of 1959, when *Naked Lunch* was being devoured voraciously and Burroughs feels he has finally surfaced from "total humiliation and failure".

His new association with the inventor of cut-ups, Brion Gysin, is in full swing: "I have new method of writing and do not want to publish anything not inspected and processed. I cannot explain this method to you until you have necessary training." Again, I disagree with Harris's thesis-neat conclusion that: "Coinciding with his physical assault on the very medium of written communication, and with the dismissal of his most intimate reader, the so-called death of the author has never been enacted so literally."

Is it not rather that a late-developing 45-year-old bohemian drifter, encouraged by the belated publication and overnight notoriety of his hardest labours, is at last asserting his independence as a literary artist? After all, Burroughs' proudest boast remains that, when asked his opinion, Samuel Beckett said of him: "Well, he's a writer."

Late starters

VICTORIAN WOMEN
Joan Perkin
John Murray, £19.99
OUTSIDERS: CLASS, GENDER AND NATION
Dorothy Thompson
Verso, £11.95 paperback/£34.95 hardback

Pat Thane

Both of these books are vigorous productions by lively women now past the usual retirement age. Both started to publish late in life, by male conventions, though both have a way to go to match another impressive late-starting historian: Bridget Hill.

Joan Perkin grew up in a working-class family in the Potteries and, though she did well at school, her family could not afford to send her to university. Instead, she entered the civil service, then raised children. As a mature student she took a degree, began to research and write, and now teaches women's history at Northwestern University, Illinois.

Dorothy Thompson's family, though artisan in origin, was more comfortably off, enabling her to go straight to Cambridge. Nevertheless, her career was also shaped and, in male terms, slowed by family responsibilities. In her case, these were combined with active involvement in the Communist Party and in the movement for nuclear disarmament.

Both—like Bridget Hill—are married to well-known historians, a fact I would not have referred to were it not the starting point of Thompson's introduction. She feels a need to obey Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's injunction that feminist writers must include some autobiography in their work. Thompson's sketch is a defence against an accusation some feminists have made against her husband, Edward: that he subordinated her work to his and even appropriated it. It is also a description of their partnership and an explanation of the form of her career.

As such, it is an interesting historical document in its own right, of the type from which Joan Perkin skilfully weaves her narrative. Her book is not aimed at scholars, but as a clear and readable survey for any interested reader. She certainly succeeds in providing an excellent and enjoyable introduction to the subject. The book makes extensive use of autobiographies and interviews to provide vivid illustration of women's lives. But it rests on a good grasp of the scholarly historiography. In describing the lives of women from birth to death, in paid and unpaid work, in philanthropy and politics and at leisure, Perkin emphasises the importance of class while covering the variety of experience among those whose material circumstances were similar, whether rich or poor.

She captures especially well the tension between the prescription of how Victorian women should act—demure, homebound—and the active public reality so evident in the biographies; between our stereotypes of "the Victorians" and what the more personal

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Irish emigrants travelling steerage to the US. "The Illustrated History of Europe" (edited by Frédéric Delouché, translated by Richard Mayne; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £17.99), also illustrates trends in publishing and politics. It's a superb pictorial primer, awash with images and documents, but accompanied by a bland Euro-text by historians from various EC countries. This is history as seen from Maastricht, moving inexorably towards an ever-closer union of peoples

sources yield about the behaviour of so many of them.

Perkin pinpoints this important question: "How and why, despite their constricted upbringing, [did] so many Victorian women develop strong and distinctive personalities?" She concludes that they set in motion a movement towards gender equality that, though it faltered many times, has brought real changes. She goes beyond her period to stress the continuing and underestimated strength of the 1920s women's movement.

Thompson's introduction shows her to be a direct inheritor of this tradition. Her "good girls'" grammar school "in suburban Kent, staffed by single women with Oxbridge Firsts, had high expectations of girls in a world [the 1930s] where this was still uncommon". Women such as the preacher and suffragist Maude Royden addressed their speech days. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* was essential reading in the sixth form.

The history of the suffrage movement and the struggles for the admission of women to higher education and the professions was taught to girls who were clearly intended to further these causes. It's a fascinating glimpse into how the aspirations of feminists in the suffrage years were passed on through less promising times.

What follows is a collection of her essays written over the past 20 years and aimed primarily at scholarly audiences. (Much of the value of Perkin's book is that she conveys such work—for example, Thompson's pioneering emphasis on the active role of women in Chartism—to those who would have no reason to read it.) First is a survey of the historiography of Chartism, primarily designed to refute Gareth Stedman Jones' modification of the notion that it was centrally a working-class movement. She reprints both the introduction to her useful collection of documents *The First Chartists* and her important assertion of the importance of women in early 19th-century radical movements. Equally important, as the next two essays show, is the role of the Irish: they, like women, were no undifferentiated group with predictable responses.

Finally, drawing on her surprising recent interest in Queen Victoria, she demonstrates how right it was for someone interested in radical republicanism to look seriously at a monarchy that so resiliently survived assault and social change—and to ask the question feminist historians had avoided about the significance of Her Majesty's gender in that survival.

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Conjurors of Clerkenwell

THE HOUSE OF DOCTOR DEE
Peter Ackroyd
Hamish Hamilton, £14.99

John Clute

At first glance, the title of Peter Ackroyd's seventh novel, and the fourth to be named after a real person, seems to tell all. Indeed, it tells much. *The House of Doctor Dee*, as one might expect from memories of *Hawksmoor*, is a tale in which the past haunts the present, in which the London of some centuries ago lays its correspondences on the glass sepulchres of today, and in which a frail modern man seems doomed to fade into a shadow and parody of a dead but more substantial figure. But this is not the whole story.

Around 1990, a young man named Matthew Palmer inherits from his father a house in Clerkenwell. (Ackroyd places the house in a fictional close located exactly where the *New Statesman* had its offices in the 1980s.) It is a strange building, and clearly manifests the rebuildings of several centuries. On moving in, Palmer finds himself haunted by dreams that threaten his identity, hinting that his very self is somehow *occupied*.

After a few pages, the novel moves to the time of John Dee (1527-1608), the Elizabethan savant and magus. For it is his house Palmer has moved into. Ackroyd deliberately scumbles any precise indications of the period the Dee chapters occupy. By indicating that the Royal Exchange is under construction, he allows readers to do their own research and to date it between 1566 and 1570. During this time, Dee is engaged in researches into the generation of life. He is attempting to create a homunculus.

The historical Doctor Dee stood, as did so many of his contemporaries, at the cusp of two worlds. He was an astrologer and astronomer both; a Neoplatonist and a man of the new science; an alchemist and a practical geographer. His mind was both tenacious and wide-ranging, and he has fascinated intellectual historians for many decades. He and his explorations play central roles in novels by writers as diverse as Marjorie Bowen (whom Ackroyd mentions), John Crowley, Gustav Meyrink and Michael Moorcock. But for much of *The House of Doctor Dee*, it looks dangerously as though, flying against these models, Ackroyd has decided to treat the Doctor as a figure of fun.

In these early pages, Dee appears as an imperceptive potential cuckold, a dupe, a comic miser, a stuffed-shirt mumpsimus, a man who knows not who he is. As such, it is sometimes difficult to pay proper heed to the iconic weight he must bear as the symbolic (and perhaps actual) shaper of poor Matthew Palmer—himself a shadowy orphan whose sexual practices are mean, and who dispiritedly misunderstands those who love him. Because of the sudden turn the novel takes halfway through, it is almost certain these derisory portraits are deliberate. The problem is that they are far too convincing.

But for those who press on, the rewards are considerable. In a version of the Neoplatonic doctrine of correspondences, Dee and Palmer occupy alternate sections throughout. Their experiences serve as mirrors of each other's souls. They are, in fact, haunted by each other, and by an underlying map of the ancient underground city of London, whose runnels contour their separate but conjoined quests for deliverance from emptiness. What redeems *The House of Doctor Dee* from Gothic cliché is something very simple: both Dee and Palmer succeed in their quests.

Dee has a vision of the City as a place without love. He suffers a tragedy; and he has a second vision, set in the "garden of the true world", and sheds the dross of his caricature self. Palmer, more modestly, bids the homunculus within him to vanish, and it vanishes; but this too is an epiphany.

The novel ends in an onrush—almost a gush—of correspondences, and a prayer that we may all become one. It is not, perhaps, unembarrassing to paraphrase. But in practice, this cunning, compulsive tale carries us, without a snicker, into love.

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Flawed peace

GRAND DAYS
Frank Moorhouse
Picador, £14.99

Bill Greenwell

Frank Moorhouse, who is a successful Australian writer, comes with impeccable credentials. He has spent some years living in France and Geneva (where *Glory Days* is set), absorbed by the issue of international relations. His subject in this novel is the League of Nations, which Moorhouse persuasively represents as a noble attempt to unite the world behind peace in the aftermath of the first world war.

Pretty obviously, it's an interesting subject to pursue, since the activities of its successor, the United Nations, are matters of much contemporary debate. Moorhouse sets about his task by introducing a naive, idealistic Australian, Edith Berry, to an offbeat British major called Ambrose Westwood. Their tentative, mildly pompous conversation on the train to their new posts in Geneva is witty, comic and—like the whole lengthy novel—agreeable to read.

The whole enterprise enjoys teetering on the brink of farce, which is precisely how Moorhouse wishes us to see the League. By far the best episode concerns the gift of a chair made by Balkan war orphans, the subject of an absurd bureaucratic wrangle.

But the novel just doesn't work. It has a very simple problem, which concerns the relationship between Ambrose and Edith. Given that Moorhouse is really dealing with characters who verge on caricature, the relationship between earnest Edith and cross-dresser Ambrose is just about believable. Yet the whole point of the relationship (which comes to dominate the novel) seems to be to illustrate what Moorhouse thinks about the League itself.

Edith and Ambrose are respectable on the outside (the League), but they have a much more complicated private relationship (the League). This is sometimes, as when they encounter fascists in a transvestite nightclub, fraught with danger (the League), and often both standoffish (the League) and even underhand (the League).

There are two particular low points. The first is a hopelessly calculated piece of self-reference: a novelist reads extracts from her novel lampooning the League. The second must have seemed a good idea at the time. Edith, whose whole being is taken up with League ethics, considers the problem of having a shit: "Why did it sometimes smear the side of the bowl and have to be cleaned off, yet on other days it did not? Was it better to have one long solid piece?" The point: League obsessives often overlooked the real, smelly world. Such deadpan attempts at humour just distract readers from their task: to agree that Edith, in her gauche and optimistic way, is to be admired, pitied, understood.

You couldn't call Moorhouse's research less than impeccable, but the most interesting effect of his novel on me was to want to find out more about the hapless League. Alas, it didn't send me hurrying off to read more Moorhouse, despite Edith's appearance in his recent and much-praised *Forty-Seventeen*. Like the League, this is a grand enterprise that meets with unfortunate failure.

Form follows failure

THE EVOLUTION OF USEFUL THINGS
Henry Petroski
Pavilion Books, £14.99

Carl Gardner

Once upon a time, when the future seemed bright and optimistic, there was a powerfully pervasive view of design and architecture that went something like this: there's a timeless, "perfect" form for everything in the world, which it's the designer's job to uncover. And if the designer does the job well, that form will automatically express the function of the artefact in question.

Of course, it was a comforting, idealist fantasy, which assumed that Mies van der Rohe's glass and steel towers or Dieter Rams' matt black shaver for Braun were somehow the immutable ends of design. The problem is that since the collapse of the modernist "form follows function" ideal no coherent theory of design has stepped in to take its place. Perhaps, as postmodernists would believe, such an overarching theory is no longer possible. Meanwhile, we have to get along with partial studies like this which, despite its rather twee title is both quirky and challenging.

Petroski, a US professor of civil engineering and author of a well-received book on the pencil, is no high-blown design theorist. Nevertheless, this book has at its core a view of the driving force behind the efforts of designers that usefully corrects the belief that design can somehow perfect the world. While maintaining a respectful admiration for the ingenuity of designers and inventors (he tends to elide the two), his bottom line is that recognition of the inevitable shortcomings and failures of past design is its major spur.

In other words, for Petroski, design proceeds primarily by overcoming the negative features of things in a piecemeal fashion, rather than by following some grand programme of social betterment. Implicit in this seemingly banal observation are two humbling, anti-modernist premises. First, that even the smallest, seemingly controllable, bits of the world are inherently non-perfectible; and secondly that all designs, no matter what their promise, are always partial and doomed to reveal their failings. "In the final analysis, the design selected [is] . . . one that, in some compromise way, failed least to satisfy both designer and client."

"Another example of misguided modernisation" where "inappropriate individualism" has spoiled the look of the whole. This comes from "Suburban Style: the British home 1840-1960", by Helena Barrett and John Phillips (Little, Brown, £14.99)

While all this might seem somewhat abstract, the way Petroski illustrates his story is much more light-hearted. With one or two less successful deviations into patent law, he takes some of the most simple artefacts and examines their design evolution in detail: the pin, the paper-clip, the table-fork, the zip fastener, the stapler, the soft drink can, the Post-it note and so on.

Two accounts stand out: the tortuous story of the zip fastener, for example, which clearly undermines the "form follows functions" myth. As early as 1851, the function of such a fastener was self-evident—but its final form didn't emerge until the first world war. And his story of the origins of the paper clip is an exemplary examination of the nexus of factors—changing technology, new materials, shifts in office routine, commercial requirements and the endless persistence of inventors and designers—that went to create this ubiquitous product.

Petroski fires off barbs at today's blinkered design critics who regard the archetypal Gem paper-clip on all our desks as the last word in functional design. For him, it has several failings that future designers will doubtless overcome. The process is endless.

There are some problems with this book: as an engineer, Petroski overemphasises "hard" functional criteria and downplays the less tangible psychological features of today's consumer products. Although he mentions figures such as Raymond Loewy, one can't help feeling that he somehow disparages "stylists" who give products a distinctive character. His heroes are the engineer-inven-

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tors of the machine age, rather than design superstars. After all, from within Petroski's world, it's difficult to explain how Philippe Starck's "Hot Bertaa" kettle for Alessi can sell steadily (for £120) when its functional attributes are almost non-existent.

Despite his occasionally archaic tone, Petroski's discussion of the evolution of fast-food packaging does touch sympathetically on the challenges that confront designers in the "post-industrial age". These concern the environment, and they can't be solved by narrow functional considerations or broader "postmodern" notions of design. His caveat could almost be taken as a motto for tomorrow's "green" design. Design's impact "can certainly be better anticipated if designers look down the design road and well beyond their immediate objectives . . . All too often the uncritical adoption of new materials or devices to solve old or imagined problems can create newer and more complex problems in an altered environment."

Fire and ice

COMPLICITY
Iain Banks
Little, Brown, £15.99
WHITE BUTTERFLY
Walter Mosley
Serpent's Tail, £7.99
MISS SMILLA'S FEELING FOR SNOW
Peter Høeg, translated by Tina Nunnally
Harvill, £9.99

John Williams

Three novels, one mostly set in Edinburgh, one in Los Angeles and one in Copenhagen: what they ostensibly have in common is that they are all crime novels. You can tell that because someone dies in the first chapter of each. It's the corpse that defines a thriller.

One could perhaps make a case for each of these books as a romantic novel, but love is weaker than death when it comes to deciding a novel's place in the marketplace. So here are three crime novels that demonstrate both the elasticity of the genre and the extent to which it has become a key form for novelists interested in writing socially committed, and more or less realist fiction.

Complicity is something of a departure for Iain Banks. It's an out-and-out thriller that harks back to the gothic *noir* of Cornell Woolrich and also to the British black comedy tradition of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. The book's hero is Cameron Colley, a self-consciously gonzo reporter from an Edinburgh newspaper with a taste for bad drugs and worse sex.

His problem is that someone is systematically murdering all the bad guys he nails in his columns: arms dealers, paedophiles, right-wing bigots. So, of course, the police suspect Cameron and, of course, Cameron is himself sucked into the killer's ambit. And no, the way things pan out is not entirely surprising. But *Complicity* is still fine as a fluently written and cheerfully grotesque yomp through contemporary Britain, spiked with a neat gimmick: the first politically correct serial killer.

White Butterfly is the third novel by Walter Mosley, the man now doomed to be referred to continually as "Bill Clinton's favourite writer". This is an altogether harsher, more serious piece of work. Mosley's novels are intended to form a cycle, providing a massive portrait of life in black Los Angeles over the postwar period as experienced by the reluctant PI Easy Rawlins.

White Butterfly sees the action move to 1957. A serial killer (yes, yet another one) is preying on black prostitutes in south central LA. No one cares much until a white hooker dies, a rich girl gone bad. Then all hell breaks loose and Easy's called in. Naturally, he solves the case.

As plots go, *White Butterfly*'s is functional and little more. But then Mosley's plots are Trojan horses. They let him into the airport bookstalls, they even let him into the White House, and they allow him to tell something like the truth about black life in the US ghetto. In particular, in this case, to say something hard and sad about the relations between black men and women in a society governed by racism.

And then there's *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, a European literary sensation from Denmark written by Peter Høeg. I'll confess I read this one last. Black LA in the 1950s just sounds that much more appealing than Denmark in the 1990s. *Miss Smilla* is 400 pages long and has a title that screams "dour Teutonic art movie of the 1970s, probably scripted by Peter Handke". And, sure enough, *Miss Smilla* has its longueurs (not to mention a plot straight out of the Michael Crichton school of scientific conspiracy thrillers). But it is still a very good book indeed.

Its strength lies in the remarkable skill with which Høeg has evoked his heroine and narrator, Smilla Jesperson. Half Dane, half Greenland Eskimo and an underemployed glaciologist, she lives on a bleak, white Copenhagen housing estate, and has frozen herself off from the world.

Then an Eskimo boy, who lives with his alcoholic mother in the flat below, falls to his death and Smilla asks some questions. So a chain of events begins that leads in the end to the warming of Smilla's heart and to a bloody reckoning in eastern Greenland. It's Greenland that gives the novel its strangeness and power as Høeg relieves it of its normal fictional role as empty, hostile territory, there to be conquered, and turns it into a place where people live. And are transported from.

In the end, then, these crime novels are three very different books. The Banks is "just a thriller"—albeit a pretty neat one—inasmuch as what you'll remember about it is most likely just the plot. The Mosley is a powerful, if not always likeable, new instalment in the most impressive series of crime novels since Ross MacDonald. And the Høeg: that's an arctic tale worthy of Conrad.

PRINTOUT

Stay angry

Boyd Tonkin

The same Sunday paper that brought news of E P Thompson's death printed a colour ad for portable phones that parodied the graphic style and hortatory prose of socialist agitprop. Buy a mobile, and it will "liberate" you from drudgery. Never mind that thousands of men and women—Thompson prominent among them—spent lives of the utmost courage and integrity to bring the ideals behind those images closer to reality. Now they're simply fodder for some smirking parasite. There could hardly be a clearer example of what Thompson, in his famous defence of plebeian radicalism, called "the enormous condescension of posterity".

It's appropriate that the death of a great social historian who devoted his last decade to the peace movement should trigger anger as well as sorrow. Far more than the other pioneers who survived Hitler's guns and cold-war dogmatism to reshape the humanities in Britain—Raymond Williams, say, or Richard Hoggart—I associate Edward Thompson with a kind of warm rage. Before I felt this in person, at those anti-nuclear rallies where he turned irony into an armour-piercing weapon, I picked up its scorching traces on the page. Other readers will have met it first in the reclamations of dissent in "The Making of the English Working Class"; for me, it came with the savage mockery of "The Poverty of Theory".

The Althusser cult in higher education, with its dalek-style repetition of "anti-humanist" mantras, would have faded fast anyway. Thompson's incandescent polemic certainly hastened its end. Then came the renewal of the arms race and the vile euphemisms of nuclear bureaucracy. At last, Thompson's blistering prose had a target worthy of its power. What distinguished his wrath—and linked it to the generous indignation of his heroes Swift, Blake and Morris—was its passionate attachment to people and principle. It had nothing in common with the snarling resentment that passes for controversy elsewhere on the left.

Thankfully, Thompson left his long-awaited work on Blake almost complete. Before it arrives, admirers should look for a little book from OUP's Indian subsidiary. "Alien Homage" (£8.95) is Thompson's study, based on family archives, of the friendship between his father—a "friend of India" and independence campaigner—and the Bengali sage, Rabindranath Tagore. The last chapters have a poignant subtext, as Thompson senior's lonely mission to mediate between east and west recalls the author's own bridge-building in a time of hate. "The degree of human alienation and intellectual division in those decades was extraordinary," he writes, adding that the elder Thompson did all he could to transcend it; he was always "a breaker of expectations and of rules". And so, unforgettably, was his son.

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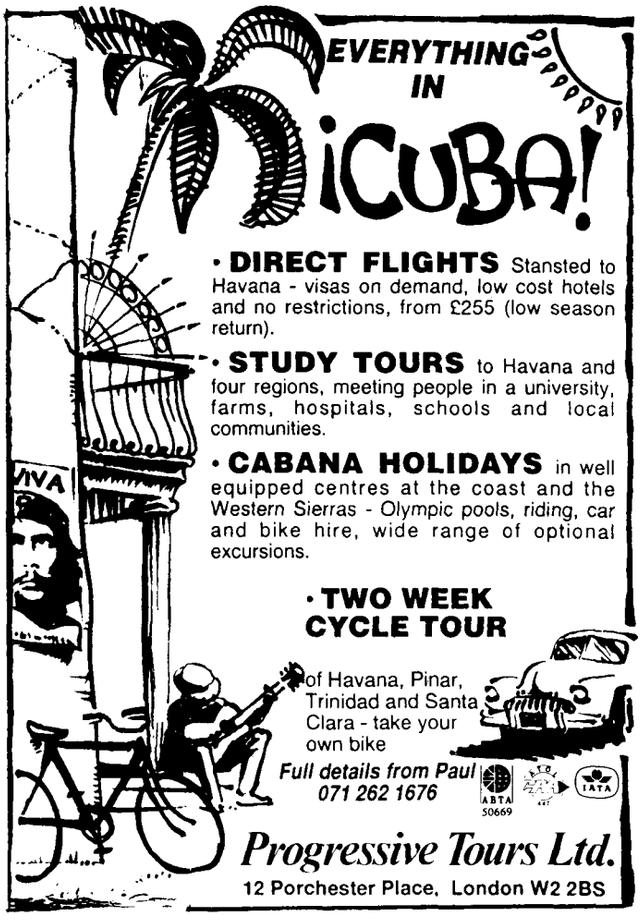

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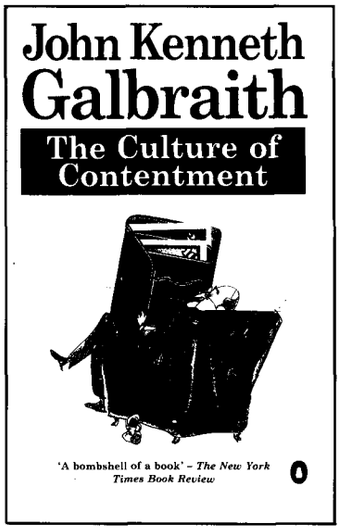

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ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3292 By Eric the Bird
We asked you for misleading advice for members of the judiciary, the police, MI5, the royal household, the armed services, or MPs.

Report by Ms de Meaner
There were quite a few who didn't quite enter into the spirit of the thing, breaking out into a real world where the misleading advice had already been taken. Like Mary-Rose Benton's idea to tell the Queen it would be a good idea to open Buckingham Palace to the public. Or Tim Hopkins, who had the bright idea that judges in rape cases should declare defendants not guilty if, among other things, "the plaintive is attractive and/or fashionably dressed". A fiver to the winners.

Martin Fagg
Martin Fagg was so many people —Molly Fitton, Tim O'Dowda, Robin Ravensbourne, Simon Littimer, Claude Spettigue, Rufus Stone, Andrew McEvoy, Paul Pitchcroft, Ian Kelso, Kit Carpenter, Colin Kimberley and Jonathan Fernside, among others —but they were all charming. The best thing about them, however, was where they all lived: The Palace, Chichester. Until the Queen decides to enter a comp, I suspect this will remain the classiest address we have ever been in correspondence with.

One of the most talented and successful compers, Martin Fagg, who died, aged 64, on 16 August,was an enigma. At times gregarious, at others a loner, he suffered from regular bouts of depression that needed hospital treatment. According to Bill Greenwell, the keeper of the *NSS* records, Martin first entered in 1960, came second in 1961, 1962 and 1963, was champion in 1965, 1969, and for the next six years. He was still second in 1979, but during the eighties and this decade veered alarmingly between top and bottom. Possibly unknown Fagg pseudonyms were getting his prize money instead.

One of his most entertaining entries (he entered as Rufus Stone) featured in *The Owl in the Sack*, the compilation of the cream of the competitions during the eighties. It was a publisher's rejection letter to Edward Gibbon:

Dear Mr Gibson
Sorry to have to return your *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (not exactly the snappiest of titles, lets face it) especially as its obviously taken you a week or two to put the stuff together but frankly theirs just no market for this sort of heavy fact book just at the moment. In fact, facts—who needs them? No doubt your's are all very accurate but there again, accuracy—who needs it? as far as marketability goes, accuracy is just there to be flaunted. Youve got to figute the anlges book-wise as of now and you're story-line just doesnt divide itself neatly into the fifty minute slots that might make it saleable otherwise TV-wise. Ive had our film rights man in but he just can't see the Jaon Collins part anywhere. But they'res good writing their no mistake, so press on
Ted—nildespairwatsit.

We shall miss him.

The armed services
—The modern army encourages cultural interests in its enlisted men, and an unashamed taste for, say, the writing of Jean Genet or the films of Derek Jarman will win the approval of your fellow-squaddies and officers alike. If on duty in Northern Ireland, remember that friendly gestures such as offering to act as unofficial postmen will help disarm the suspicion of the locals.
Basil Ransome-Davies

—If your commanding officer stops and eyes you up and down when you're on parade, it is not necessarily because there's something wrong with your appearance; it may be he has taken a fancy to you. Give him a slight wink. This will help him to remember your face, and may even lead to your being singled out for promotion.
Stanley J Sharpless

The police
—When a policeman's notebook is full he should send it for safekeeping to *Liberty*.
George Rees

—Showing favouritism to chief constables and superintendents stopped for motoring offences will result in disciplinary charges.
Watson Weeks

The judiciary
—A senior judge must never seem aloof from the everyday world—so get in as many references to the Sex Pistols as you can, because they are the leading edge of nineties popular culture. Conversely, a layperson newly appointed to the Bench has to counter assumptions that they are uneducated. You should therefore use plenty of Latin phrases whenever appropriate, such as *Hinc illae lacrimae* or *Mit oder ohne Umlaut*.
Robin Oakley-Hill

—The phrase "sniffing Coke" refers to an attempt to ensure that one has not been offered Pepsi Cola by an unscrupulous retailer, much as one might take care not to be offered an indifferent Chablis at one's wine merchant.
Nicholas Murray

—Nothing is more numbingly boring for the accused and his/her family than to be able to estimate the likely sentence, so vary your criteria and reassess your values on a daily basis. Above all, aim to surprise.
Michael Birt

MPs
—The fire alarms are tested frequently. Whenever you hear bells, leave the chamber and evacuate the building completely.

—The front seats nearest the Speaker are reserved for new members.
Nicholas Hodgson

—The box on the table adjoining the front bench contains cigars for the use of members. If it is empty, ask one of the clerks to replenish it.
Noel Petty

—It is customary to use the occasion of the Queen's speech to practice your parliamentary prerogative of intervention by heckling, shouting "Rubbish!",

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have something in common

1. Used to find Easter
2. Defeated by Johnson
3. Western Mongol empire
4. Pelican, subsequently
5. Ghana, previously
6. Brighton pitch
7. State ceremonial figure
8. US comedienne
9. Chaplin film
10. Haliç

Answers overleaf

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and throwing eggs or ripe tomatoes at the monarch.

Eric Swainson

—Letters for mailing to constituents are usually left on the dispatch box. Overseas correspondence should be handed to the Foreign Secretary.
—Ambitious members who wish to catch the eye of their party leaders are advised to sit upon the benches immediately opposite; he will be especially grateful should you rise to point out any factual error he may make whilst speaking.

Charlene Croft

—When you are called to deliver your maiden speech, it is customary to hold the mace aloft.

Bill Greenwell

—The correct term for the gentlemen's lavatory in the house is "The chamber".

D A Prince

MI5
—When sending confidential reports through the post, maintain security by addressing the envelope in invisible ink.
—Working undercover can be a lonely and frustrating job. In most towns and villages you will find a special agent, code-name "Brown Owl", who is there to attend to your inner needs.

Hamish Soutar

—Secrecy is now secondary to good relations. If you should see a foreign agent, at a bus stop for instance, don't ignore him: give him a jovial prod in the leg with your umbrella.

Noel Petty

No 3295 Set by Eric the Bird
Wanted: estate agents' descriptions of the Albert Hall, St Peter's, Versailles, Buckingham Palace, the Taj Mahal, or any other famous building that might unexpectedly come on the market. No more than 200 words and in by 16 September.

Quiz answers

All are "golds": 1) Golden number; 2) Goldwater; 3) Golden Horde; 4) Golden Hind; 5) Gold Coast; 6) Goldstone Ground; 7) Gold Stick; 8) Goldie Hawn; 9) Gold Rush; 10) Golden Horn. NB: 4: Drake's ship renamed; 10: Istanbul harbour

SALAMANCA

Salamanca 199 — "Nursery Crime — 5"

Parts of answers beginning in or running into the shaded area are mostly jumbled. Eight Across answers must be entered with an extra letter, involved in the secondary clueing, checked by Down answers. One other two-word answer's entry may be deduced, since all these elements are connected.

Copies of the Collins Concise English Dictionary for the first three correct entries opened. Entries to Salamanca 199, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by Monday 13 September.

ACROSS

1 Catch husband returning, new head now spurning.
7 Copy snub nose or one that's long in well-informed times.
12 State of one who only does what he's told, off with cold.
13 Chap, one upsetting with opening lines.
14 What's got from faulty socket or line, eh, with a little current in, say?
15 Range no more after contest — see Hazel & Co's nest?
16 Jewish year's beginning — it is breaking round mid spring.
17 Be foolish no more at party, had a spell at rest.
19 Call up a guy in a frenzied cry.
24 Notice a record in Times Square? They're totally skilled.
27 Money (often gold) in old note child's to hold?
28 Not our coins — a sweep the taxman filled?
29 Do I state part superseded — by bath?
31 Matted mineral mass on mere chalk tor.
32 Naik's agitated, by nature related.
33 Remove knot from one tree — hollow bore?
34 Having uneven ground cross man would get round.
35 About to get new cast, goes through play once more.

DOWN

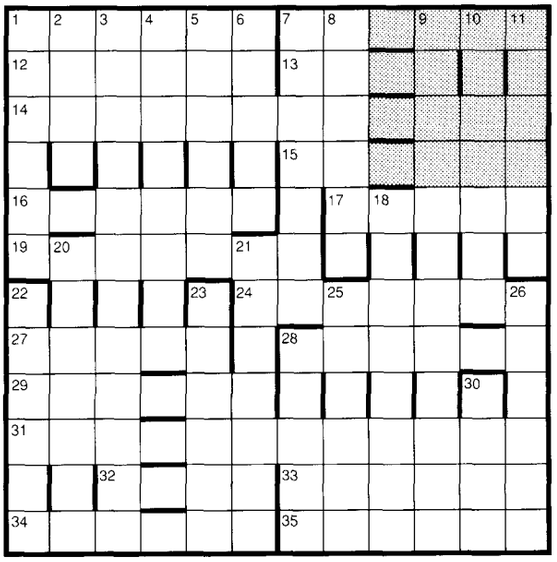
1 Uproar as centre of tape is knocked out by fast runner.
2 "Harmonious" chap climbing in ravine.
3 Cop this halo shimmering — it holds energy, divinely inspired.
4 Elaborate fugue Carrier composed around middle note,.
5 Proboscis monkeys with tail given a new start.
6 Voracious eater in confusion about age.
7 Stray wound about not old—it's lost to poet
8 Place one drinks in well erected?
9 Old cows' unhealthy patch is one cured by exercise?
10 Here you'll find Scottish black deer.
11 Take turns at entering into parrotlike performance.
18 Small work more than one poetaster's composed.
21 The finishing part of thanks I grant.
22 First of runners-up among abundance of Scots?
23 Maize: see me covering lea if not fine perhaps.
25 Medicine one Scottish island's bottled.
26 They leave footprints right in wet sand?
28 Ghost depicted in tabernacle mural.
30 Money laid on bet that's failed might incur it.

Prizewinners for Salamanca 197
K. Rimmer, Nottingham
J. Grimshaw, London SW18
Bill Anderson, London W6

Solution to Salamanca 197

F	B	I	S	W	H	I	P	S	A	W	S
R	A	G	H	A	E	T	O	C	H	A	I
E	R	A	O	W	L	G	E	R	I	N	G
I	M	P	R	O	V	I	S	A	T	E	D
G	Y	O	N	L	E	G	T	M	E	R	I
H	**E**	S	T	A	G	**R**	**A**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**S**
T	R	Y	P	A	R	A	M	E	D	I	C
T	I	Z	Z	U	A	P	P	R	O	N	U
R	N	Y	I	C	I	T	S	H	O	E	S
A	G	G	L	U	T	I	N	A	N	T	S
I	L	Y	A	B	H	O	R	N	A	T	E
N	Y	A	S	A	S	N	U	D	G	E	S

197



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BACKCHAT

Vote Labour and save the country from the reds, says **Mat Coward**

Let's just recap shall we? Because I think I'm probably not the only one who's lost the thread a bit lately. Okay: on the one hand, we have what we call the Conservative Party, viz and to wit the party of the first party—that is, the party of the individual, of the independent, well-off, family types. The Me-and-Mine Party, in business to serve those members of the community who do not consider themselves to be members of the community.

And this is the party that's going to put up taxes in order to avoid cutting expenditure on public services, right? I mean, is it just me, or did all this used to be a lot simpler years ago?

Never mind, let's try and follow it through logically—on the other side, we have the side that goes under the name of the Labour Party, and which is suspected of using or having used any or all of the following aliases: the Labour and Co-operative Movement; the Labour and Trade Union Movement; the People's Party. Also known as: This Great Movement of Ours, Comrades.

And, of course—and reasonably enough, I guess, here in this alternative universe, where the second world war never happened, and Neville Baldwin is still on the throne of England—that second party, that party of the party-people, established for and sustained by those who think a "free individual" is what you get when you buy five fruit pies for the price of four—that party, let it be noted, is the very one, and no other, that has now declared that it will not, under any circumstances imaginable, ever increase any taxes anywhere at all.

Especially not for rich folk. No, sir. In fact, come to think of it, maybe it'd just make the whole thing a great deal easier if we just abolished income taxes entirely. Leave all that stuff to the Tories, the party of big government.

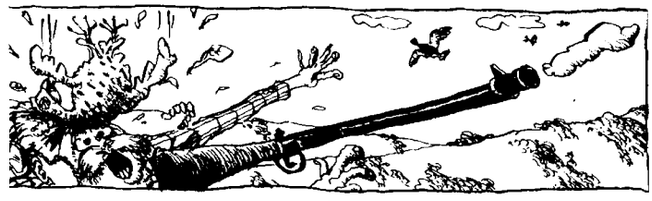
Meanwhile, the Conservatives, those free-enterprise crusaders, they're quickly losing interest in privatisation. They've decided it doesn't work, and nobody wants it, and when you really come to think about it, the Post Office might just as well stay as it is, and though deregulating the buses in the capital city could be fun, it would probably cause more trouble than it's worth, in the long run.

On the other hand, these arguments don't fool the Labour Party. Not even for a minute. The modern socialist would much rather die than threaten the renationalisation of the water or the railways or the hospitals. It's a matter of principle, you understand: the Labour leaders know—how could they not know, how could they be the only ones in the country who don't know?—that renationalisation is what the voters want. But Labour, thank you very much, is not a vote-chasing gang of cynical populists like the Tories. Deflation and deindustrialisation may not be a big pull at the polls, but they're our policies and we're sticking to them.

As the Tories listen—and, having listened, list to the left—and Labour blocks its ears, droning onwards with all the inspirational charisma of a dentist's drill, a question increasingly heard is: what's the point of voting for a socialist party that lies to the right of the right?

The answer, surely, is obvious. It is England's duty now to support Labour, more than ever before—as that is the only sure way of preventing this country being taken over by statists, collectivists and high-spending reds.

FORTEANA



Pythons, emus and peanuts can be the death of you, reports **Paul Sieveking**

On Sunday morning, 2 January 1825, Harvey Loomis, first minister of Bangor, Maine, walked in a snow storm up to his meeting house, with a sermon on the text: "This year thou shalt die." The grim reaper turned out to be in rather a hurry. When Loomis had seated himself in the pulpit, he had a fit of apoplexy and died in ten minutes. He was 36, according to W Allen's *American Biographical and Historical Dictionary* (1832), wherein I found this curious anecdote. Strange deaths have become a regular feature in the Fortean archives. Here's the latest crop.

Ken Charles Barger, 47, accidentally shot and killed himself last December in Newton, North Carolina. Awakening to the sound of a ringing telephone beside his bed, he reached for the phone but grabbed instead a Smith & Wesson .38 Special, which discharged when he drew it to his ear (*Hickory Daily Record*, 21 December 1992).

In July, Stephen Cawthorne, 43, a former district engineer from York, was killed when his motorcycle collided with an emu near Mount Surprise, Queensland. A week earlier, on 16 July, motorcyclist Kelly Cordry, 39, was killed when a 40-pound black dog fell on him from a railway bridge in Commerce City, Colorado. The motorcycle slammed into the crash barrier and Cordry was thrown into the path of oncoming traffic (Reuters, 26 July; *Denver Post*, 17 July).

There was another odd death in Commerce City, a suburb of Denver, four days later. Derek Romero, 15, was found crushed to death on a bedroom floor with the family's 11.5ft Burmese python, Sally, coiled next to him. The snake, which belonged to the victim's elder brother, was quite agitated and hissed at the police. It had been in the house for eight years, and had no history of attacking people. Since Sally had been fed a rabbit about five days earlier, it was unlikely that she was seeking prey. The family's theory was that Romero forgot to wash his hands after playing with a pet rabbit—a definite no-no, since snakes hunt by smell (Reuters, *Rocky Mountain News*, 21 July).

Jackie D Johnson, 19, was killed in his mobile home at Adams Branch, near Elkhorn City, Kentucky, on 23 February. A 10-foot-square, 30-ton boulder fell about 500 feet from a cliff and crashed through the roof on to the sofa where he was sitting. Virgil Ramey, his grandfather, who was sitting beside him, escaped with a broken shoulder. His grandmother, Lucille, had just got up to let her little dog in, and was uninjured (AP, 25 February).

Cooper Williams, aged four, of Sykesville, Maryland, was playing on a two-foot statue of the Virgin Mary at Our Lady Center in suburban Baltimore on 25 May, when he apparently lost his balance and grabbed the statue as he fell. The child was struck on the head and killed (*Rocky Mountain News*, 27 May).

On 24 April, Kwarme Shariff, seven, was playing with his twin brother Kwasi outside their apartment block in North Brunswick, New Jersey. He stuck his foot in a small hole and the ground gave way, swallowing him up. The boy's father and two neighbours tried to pull him out, but each time he slipped from their grasp and slid deeper into soft mud. A hundred rescuers worked for more than seven hours to dig him out, but he was dead on arrival at hospital. The township's "traditionally high water table" may have been a factor in the ground's collapse (*New York Times*, 25 April; AP, 26 April).

Also in April, Willie Murphy, 61, an employee of the Golden Peanut Company in Donalsonville, Georgia, was killed when he was crushed under an avalanche of peanuts; while in July, a 23-year-old sweet factory worker in Marseilles, France, was crushed to death when a bin filled with 5,000 pounds of marshmallows fell on him (*USA Today*, 5 April; *Daily Record*, 15 July).

Nanette Meech, 76, of Santa Fe, was canoeing down the Brule River in Wisconsin with her daughter Laurie on 15 July when a 40-foot poplar tree, about 18 inches in diameter, which had been gnawed by a beaver, crashed down on her head with fatal consequences (*Denver Post*, 17 July).

Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"

Felix Dennett

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